

2017

# The Political Suppression of the Saxophone and its Subsequent Pedagogical Development in Select Non-Democratic Countries

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The Political Suppression of the Saxophone and its Subsequent Pedagogical  
Development in Select Non-Democratic Countries

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in

Music Performance

School of Music

University of South Carolina

2017

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## **Dedication**

This document is dedicated to my family who has always supported my artistic and educational endeavors. It is especially dedicated to my loving wife, who has provided an abundance of love and support throughout this entire process.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am forever indebted to my father for inspiring me to play the saxophone; to my mother for all of her love and support through the years; to my grandmother Florella Johnson who has always nurtured my intellectual curiosity; to my grandmother Lucy Young who has tirelessly encouraged me to pursue my dreams and who has believed in me every step along the way; to Sue Richardson and Carlton Wilkes for helping me find my musical voice; to the memory of Bob LeFever who introduced me to classical saxophone and helped start me on my current musical path; to Dr. Frederick L. Hemke for teaching me how to do more than “push the buttons;” to Dr. John Sampen for pushing me farther than I thought possible; to Dr. Clifford Leaman for his guidance, depth of knowledge, and pedagogical brilliance; to Dr. Stacy Maugans for her formidable research on the Russian saxophone and for her advice throughout this project. Very special thanks are owed to Jonathan Kammer, Sergey Kolesov, Xin Gao, and Hantao Li for the tremendous generosity with their time, knowledge, and talents; and, without whom this project would have been impossible. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Michelle Smith Johnson for her indefatigable encouragement and support.

## **Abstract**

Almost universally, the saxophone struggled to gain acceptance in the early years following its invention; however, the obstacles faced were much more arduous in some places than others. The saxophone faced many serious impediments to acceptance, especially in the non-democratic 20<sup>th</sup>-century countries of China and the Soviet Union. It is the purpose of this research to explore the institutional roadblocks, their removal, and to profile the people responsible for the subsequent development of formidable pedagogical saxophone traditions in recent years.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The struggle of the saxophone to gain acceptance and recognition in the classical music world has always been an uphill battle. This struggle, coupled with the political climates of countries like the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and even China in the middle of the twentieth century made its acceptance even less likely. The prohibition of the saxophone was explicit in some cases and implicit in others. At one time, two of the important Soviet Publications *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* carried out a public dispute over the legitimacy of jazz as an appropriate musical medium, muddying the waters for citizens with any interest in the Western art form.<sup>1</sup> Following the Second World War the word “jazz” alone, which would certainly have been associated with the saxophone, was illegal to say in public in the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> In addition to helping to shape the trajectory of the saxophone’s history in general, conditions like these also affected the saxophone’s role in western art music. As is often the case, the relative importance of something to a society can be estimated by the pedagogical emphasis placed on it in institutions of higher learning. As a result of these strictures, the use of saxophone by composers and its adoption by conservatories was limited. Compared to other Western

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<sup>1</sup> Stacy Maugans, *The History of Saxophone and Saxophone Music in St. Petersburg, Russia* (Indiana University, 2000), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 17.

countries under different political circumstances, the saxophone gained acceptance relatively late. Invented in the early 1840s by Belgian instrument maker Adolphe Sax, saxophone classes appeared shortly thereafter at the Paris Conservatory, taught by the inventor himself. Similarly, classes in the United States in music schools such as the New England Conservatory and the Grand Conservatory existed in the early 1880s.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, such classes were not taught in the Soviet Union until after 1970; and it was not until the late 1990s that formal saxophone classes appeared in Chinese conservatories.<sup>4</sup>

Despite such hindrances, many of these countries have emerged recently as significant contributors to the wealth of saxophone pedagogy and repertoire; however, at present relatively little is known about the forces (people, events, etc.) that brought about the shift in policy and attitude directed towards Adolphe Sax's oft-maligned creation. There are far too many instances of triumph over adversity in the saxophone's relatively short history to detail them all, but it is the intent of this research to bring to light some of the characters that have helped and continue to help the saxophone in its pursuit of gaining an even larger foothold in the course of musical history in countries where its acceptance was limited by governmental control.

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph McNeill Murphy, "Early Saxophone Instruction in American Educational Institutions" (D.M.A., Northwestern University, 1994), v, <http://search.proquest.com.pallas2.tcl.sc.edu/pqdtft/docview/304143564/abstract/E88512C6011C4623PQ/1?accountid=13965>.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher John Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, Bowling Green State University. Thesis, no. 3456 (Bowling Green, Ohio: Ford, 1979), 5–8; Clifford Leaman, "Saxophone Master Class" (University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, February 2014).

## **Purpose of the Study**

This research project will explore the ways in which the political environments of various mid-twentieth century nations affected the saxophone's history and its place in the evolving landscape of the western art music tradition. Secondly, it will identify the catalysts for change from formal prohibition of the instrument to a level of acceptance that has become a staple in many music conservatories around the globe. In only a few short decades several countries that formerly prohibited the instrument have now begun producing first rate performers and teachers who have won international competitions and who occupy prestigious positions at institutions around the world. Sergey Kolosov's first prize at the 2006 Adolphe Sax Competition in Dinant, Belgium shocked many in attendance. Previously, the majority of winners had not only been from France, but had often been students at the esteemed Paris Conservatory. Even with the United States' comparatively well-developed saxophone pedagogy, only once has an American even made it to the third and final round of the competition, when Otis Murphy placed second. For a Russian player to win was a major step forward for the saxophone community there. Following Kolesov's win in 2006, two Russian saxophonists made the final round, finishing second and sixth respectively in the 2010 competition, and in 2014 another Russian, Nikita Zimin won first prize, further illustrating the country's continuing ascent in the saxophone world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "Competition - Adolphe Sax," accessed March 27, 2017, <http://sax.dinant.be/en/competition>; "DINANT 2010," accessed June 30, 2015, <http://dinant2010.adolphesax.com/>.

The chief goal of this study will be to identify the links between the modern day state of saxophone instruction in these various countries and the influences, whether foreign, domestic, or some combination that helped to efface the obstacles that had previously stood in the way of serious pedagogical establishment.

### **Need for the Study**

Although not exhaustive, there is plentiful research on the suppression of the saxophone throughout its history. Naturally, through the course of their research, scholars have touched on the early development of saxophone instruction; but in most cases these discussions are limited to a few pages within a chapter; and much of the research is outdated at this point and in need of follow up research to bridge the gap. As yet, a thorough study on the impact of the political abuses leveled against the saxophone on the development of pedagogy has not been undertaken. Despite the ascent of the saxophone and competent performers in these countries, the parties and forces responsible for the development of saxophone pedagogy in the wake of governmental censure are largely unknown in the West.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Because of the extended period of time between present day and the active suppression of the saxophone, the research will be limited to living saxophonists and musicians knowledgeable about the subject matter as well as existing physical materials that may be unavailable here in the United States. As a result, there is the likelihood of encountering faulty memories and incomplete histories of the events, people, and places involved in shaping the instruction of the saxophone.

## Related Literature

Since its first appearance on the musical scene in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the misfortunes of the saxophone have been well documented. From the early abuses leveled against Mr. Sax, to the instrument's mistreatment as a result of its close association with jazz in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the scholarship in this area is robust. As it pertains strictly to the effects of these misfortunes on the development of pedagogy, the subject is broached only tangentially, and in limited scope in a few theses and dissertations. Because of this limited scope of the research, coupled with its out datedness (most of this research was performed 20 or more years ago) make the need for further scholarship even more pressing and necessary. Furthermore, the lion's share of this research as it relates specifically to the saxophone, its suppression, and subsequent pedagogical development has focused on the Soviet Union and its well-documented eschewal of all things associated with Western culture, specifically that of the United States.

Written in 1979, Christopher Ford's thesis "The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union" provides a valuable, although limited view into the then budding potential of the saxophone following Joseph Stalin's death in 1953 and the loosening of the strictures inherent in the socialist realist and Zhdanovistic policies.<sup>6</sup> Also useful is Mr. Ford's descriptions of some of the earliest people and events that most likely first exposed Soviet citizens to classical saxophone as a solo instrument. In chapter one of his thesis, Ford briefly chronicles the

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<sup>6</sup> Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 4.

University of Michigan's 1961 tour of the Soviet Union and American saxophonist Donald Sinta's very successful performances of Paul Creston's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* and band.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the brief, yet important exposure to the American classical saxophone, Ford also touches on the substantial impact that French saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix would later have, closer to the time of the relaxation of Soviet policies responsible for the saxophone's relative absence in the Soviet musical scene up to that point.<sup>8</sup> Through his visit and performances early in the 1970s, Londeix would forge an important relationship with Russian composer Edison Denisov that would begin paving the way for the saxophone's legitimization in the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to highlighting some of the early western influences on the development of the saxophone pedagogy, Ford's document is also useful in that it makes the connection between the western influences, particularly Londeix's, that laid a large part of the foundation for the early Russian school of saxophone playing and the start of formal saxophone instruction in the Soviet Union, beginning at the Moscow Conservatory in the early 1970s.<sup>10</sup> Despite Londeix's large influence and early visibility in the fledgling saxophone school, the connection between the early days and the contemporary saxophone pedagogical culture is less documented and in need of further study.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 4; Edison Denisov, "SaxAme: Letters: Denisov," accessed April 30, 2014, <http://www.saxame.org/letters/denisov/denisov1.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 9.

As a result of research projects such as Mr. Ford's, and because of the subsequent popularity gained by Edison Denisov's *Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Piano* dedicated to Jean-Marie Londeix, the special relationship forged between Messrs. Londeix and Denisov has been well-documented. At least in its early stages, the beginnings of saxophone pedagogy in Russia owed much to the exposure to the instrument and its peculiar abilities during Londeix's tour in the 1970s.<sup>11</sup> The specifics of this importance as it relates to the early relationship between Denisov and Londeix and the development of the now canonized sonata are preserved online in the form of letters between composer and performer. In these correspondences Londeix urges Denisov to write for the saxophone and appraises him of some of the techniques possible on the saxophone that were largely unknown in the Soviet Union up to that point.<sup>12</sup> Although not a saxophonist himself, because of his stature in the Soviet Union, Denisov's style and choice to make use of some of the saxophone's more avant-garde techniques would inspire future composers and contribute to the development of a particularly Russian style of saxophone playing and composition.

A more recent, but still dated exploration of the saxophone in Russia is Stacy Maugans' 2000 dissertation *The History of Saxophone and Saxophone Music in St. Petersburg, Russia*. It is useful for its description of the state of the saxophone during the 1990s in St. Petersburg. As one of the main cultural hotspots in Russia, the saxophone's plight there was likely indicative of the trajectory of its pedagogical

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Denisov, "SaxAme: Letters: Denisov."

development elsewhere in the country. In her dissertation Maugans describes the struggle of the saxophone to remain afloat in post-Soviet St. Petersburg during the 1990s, not because of a heavy handed governmental regime as had been the case earlier, but because of serious economic concerns.<sup>13</sup> The elimination of instruction at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, the uncertainty of future instruction, as well as the alternate paths available to would-be saxophonists are all well-chronicled in the Maugans document.<sup>14</sup> Dr. Maugans also explores the trajectory of a saxophonist's journey as a player from an elementary school beginner to full professor in the Russian educational system.<sup>15</sup>

Richard Ingham's 1998 *Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone* represents a seminal work on the many different aspects of the instrument's history, pedagogical, and mechanical developments. In spite of its relative silence on the pedagogy of saxophone in China or Russia, Ingham's compendium is a valuable resource because of its listing of the most prominent contemporary (as of its 1998 publishing date) concert saxophonists in various countries around the world, even those countries not often associated with the instrument. Conspicuously absent from this list is China; however, a couple of pedagogues and performers from Russia are listed, potentially providing a useful jumping off point for further research of important people in the instruction of saxophone in these countries.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, in their joint chapter in the book, French

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<sup>13</sup> Maugans, *The History of Saxophone and Saxophone Music in St. Petersburg, Russia*, 33.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–37.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 35–36.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Ingham, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 49–50.



saxophonists Claude Delangle and Jean-Denis Michat provide examples not only of the same aforementioned saxophonists in various countries, but also of their relationships with different composers around the world. In addition to providing an interesting insight into the specific cultural leanings of these saxophone communities, it may be possible in the future to glean information about potential connections between a certain type of repertory and specific teaching climates in these different places.<sup>17</sup>

Even absent the suppression that the saxophone has faced in some places around the world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the emergence of the saxophone as a serious instrument to be considered alongside other more established orchestral instruments has been a challenge in what one might consider a normal situation. Excepting the city ordinances mandating a curfew for jazz saxophonists in places like Kansas City during the rise of jazz, the saxophone's plight in the United States in comparison to some other parts of the world has been relatively unfettered, at least as far as governmental censure is concerned.<sup>18</sup> Even so, an understanding of the struggles of the saxophone, its pedagogical development, and the place of the American saxophone school within the global saxophone community during the middle to late 20<sup>th</sup> century will be invaluable to the researcher trying to similarly place the divergent saxophone cultures elsewhere. In his 1994 dissertation, *Early Saxophone Instruction in American Educational Institutions*, saxophonist and pedagogue Joseph Murphy details not only the history of the saxophone in American universities and conservatories, but also its link to the original

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 162–63.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Segell, *The Devil's Horn: The Story of the Saxophone, from Noisy Novelty to King of Cool* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 72.

French school of saxophone playing.<sup>19</sup> Murphy's document will more than likely prove to be an invaluable benchmark resource providing details against which to compare the findings in the research of other countries.

A more recent publication that makes an attempt to cover the entirety of the saxophone's history is Michael Segell's 2005 book *The Devil's Horn*. Subtitled, "The Story of the Saxophone, From Noisy Novelty to the King of Cool" the book covers the saxophone's journey from invention to modern day, but with an emphasis on the struggle of the instrument to gain acceptance not only in non-democratic political environments, but elsewhere as well. Similar to Dr. Murphy's dissertation, Segell's book provides several disparate narratives of the saxophone's development and provides a larger context in which to view the similarities and differences in the ways the saxophone has been treated societally. In the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter he describes the degree to which Hitler and Goebbels despised any artistic expression with roots in the West, the saxophone undoubtedly included.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the rocky, unpredictable relationship between the saxophone and the Soviet government under Stalin is explored. The periodic loosening of strictures concerning the instrument followed shortly thereafter by the inevitable round up and exile or execution of saxophonists was par for the course for much of the Soviet era.<sup>21</sup>

Although the need for further research on the development of saxophone pedagogy in Soviet Russia becomes evident in the reading of related extant materials,

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<sup>19</sup> Murphy, "Early Saxophone Instruction in American Educational Institutions," 136.

<sup>20</sup> Segell, *The Devil's Horn*, 224.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 222.

information on the saxophone's early development and pedagogy in China is, at least in American institutions, absent from literature on saxophone. However, the late appearance of the saxophone classes in the conservatories is evidence of much needed research in that area and the connections with English speaking Chinese saxophone teachers of people like Dr. Clifford Leaman at the University of South Carolina and Dr. John Sampen of Bowling Green State University are promising avenues through which to explore the maturation process of saxophone pedagogy in China.

### **Design and Procedures**

The final document representing the study will be made up of four chapters, a bibliography, and appendices including transcripts of interviews conducted with people knowledgeable about the subject matter for the purposes of this research project. The first chapter will contain an introduction, the purpose for the study, need for the study, the limitations of the study, a review of related literature, and the design and procedures for the resultant research document. The second chapter will explore the saxophone's history in China and its progress towards acceptance under Communist rule in the 20 and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries with a spotlight on and profiles of individuals closely associated with the Chinese saxophone tradition. The third chapter will address the post-Soviet pedagogical development of the saxophone and highlight important Russian saxophone players and pedagogues. The fourth chapter will draw conclusions about the similarities and differences between the paths of the saxophone instruction in the two countries under similar, much less than ideal circumstances and provide a conclusion to the research project.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The History of the Saxophone and Saxophone Pedagogy in China**

#### **Western Music in China**

The introduction of the saxophone to the Chinese people aligns closely with the serious introduction of Western culture and influence to China. In this case, the obscurity of, and hesitance to embrace the saxophone as a viable means of musical expression coincides largely with the Chinese government's penchant and long-standing tendency towards skepticism, if not outright hostility towards Western culture prior to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, despite these impediments, there is evidence to suggest the existence of an ancient Chinese musical system comparable to that of the West, a system based on octaves divided into semitones rather than the now traditional pentatonic scale. Some documentation also suggests that earlier exposure to Western musical traditions (around 1400) may have influenced the development of traditional Chinese music.<sup>23</sup> However, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup>-century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup>, practically speaking, Chinese culture existed independent of the West. Mostly owing to its robust cultural conventions and a strong sense of national

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<sup>22</sup> Chen Chen, *The Development of the Western Orchestra in China* (Ball State University, 1998), 20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

pride, Western culture had been seen as mostly irrelevant up until that point.<sup>24</sup> The Qing Dynasty was generally hostile to most European cultural conventions. Following the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China took its place. During these contentious years of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the saxophone made its first appearances of any importance in some of the military bands of rival military factions.<sup>25</sup> However, it would be the prominence of the saxophone in the dance hall bands of the larger, more cosmopolitan cities that really brought the saxophone into the consciousness of the Chinese people. It would be some time before the saxophone as a classical instrument would find its place in Chinese society. The saxophone, as featured in the dance hall bands of cities such as Shanghai, featured the instrument as a medium for pop music and jazz.<sup>26</sup> During this time, because of its association with the capitalist West, the saxophone was viewed unfavorably by the Chinese government.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the governmental impediments to significant embrace of European artistic culture that had existed during the Qing Dynasty, a limited, yet meaningful exchange with the West can be seen in the earlier acceptance of the symphony orchestra. In approximately 1879, the first Western orchestra began to develop in China, illustrating, at the very least, a curiosity and complexity of thought surrounding the restricted and complicated relationship that China had with the West.<sup>28</sup> Despite the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 20–22.

<sup>25</sup> Yusheng Li, “The Saxophone In China,” *Saxophone Journal* 24, no. 3 (February 2000): 57.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> John Robert Brown, “A View From China,” accessed February 4, 2017, <http://www.john-robert-brown.com/yusheng-li.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> Chen, *The Development of the Western Orchestra in China*, 17.

growing prevalence of this curiosity, the study of Western music or instruments had the potential to be a very dangerous undertaking.<sup>29</sup> Moving forward, the collective attitude of the Chinese people, as well as its government, to the West remained convoluted, with many fits and starts between outright rejection and acceptance along the way. Furthermore, the relationship between the arts and government remained a close one, with the arts seen by the higher-ups as a vehicle for governmental rather than personal expression.<sup>30</sup> Not until the aftermath of the tumultuous Cultural Revolution in the 1970s, with the country's more permanent openness to all things Western, would the climate be ripe for the saxophone to be accepted as a classical instrument.<sup>31</sup>

### **Classical Saxophone Comes to China**

In the years following the end of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, despite the seismic shift that had occurred societally, the common view of the saxophone, among those who knew anything about it, remained virtually unchanged. Unlike the instruments of the Western orchestra, the saxophone was still seen as a lesser instrument, fit to play only popular music or jazz. This perception of the instrument would persist; however, during the 1980s, with the now more open attitude toward the West, the instrument's popularity increased due to renewed interest in dance hall bands and jazz music.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the re-emergence of the dance hall

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<sup>29</sup> Hantao Li and Sheldon Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2, November 10, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Richard King et al., eds., *Art in Turmoil: The Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-76*, Contemporary Chinese Studies (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 5.

<sup>31</sup> Li, "The Saxophone In China," 57.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

bands, the popularity of the saxophone soared when the country was introduced to the music of Kenny G.<sup>33</sup>

This confluence of factors led to the saxophone becoming not only a popular instrument to listen to, but also a popular instrument for children and amateur musicians to learn how to play.<sup>34</sup> This increasing popularity of the saxophone also allowed people to begin questioning the range of stylistic potential of which the instrument might be capable. Although the classical saxophone was virtually unknown in the country at the time, some saxophone enthusiasts with professional musical training, began to suspect that the saxophone might be well-suited to a wide range of musical styles. With cultural contact becoming more common between the People's Republic of China and western countries, it would not be long before such imaginings would be proven correct.<sup>35</sup> In 1990, the Chinese government invited Canadian concert saxophonist Paul Brodie to Beijing to give recitals and masterclasses. For many of those in attendance, Paul Brodie's talks and performances sparked an interest in the potential of the saxophone as a high-brow, Western classical instrument. Two years later, in 1992, Brodie returned to China, this time to Chengdu and, in a very real sense, this trip to China was the catalyst for the development of a Chinese classical saxophone tradition.<sup>36</sup> During this second trip, Yusheng Li, a professor in the Sichuan

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<sup>33</sup> Li and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.; Li, "The Saxophone In China," 57–58.

<sup>35</sup> Liu Liu, "Yusheng Li," *Saxophone Journal* 30, no. 2 (December 2005): 27.

<sup>36</sup> Li, "The Saxophone In China," 57; Liu, "Yusheng Li," 27.

Conservatory's Chinese Instrument Department and self-taught amateur saxophonist, made arrangements to study with Brodie in Canada.<sup>37</sup>

### **Yusheng Li: China's First Saxophone Professor**

Saxophonist Yusheng Li was born in Chongqing and became involved in music at the age of ten. Li's first instrument of choice was a traditional Chinese bamboo flute, an instrument that remained popular in China until the Cultural Revolution.<sup>38</sup> Yusheng Li continued his musical activities into adulthood and received his musical education at Sichuan Conservatory where he currently serves as professor of saxophone.<sup>39</sup> Having come of age prior to the Cultural Revolution, however, Li's career as a saxophonist developed later in his life. As a student at Sichuan Conservatory of Music, Li majored in Chinese traditional instruments, specializing in the suona, a Chinese bamboo flute.<sup>40</sup> Li graduated in 1982 and served as a professor in the Chinese Instrument Department for nearly a decade before turning his focus to the saxophone.<sup>41</sup>

During the 1980s, while teaching at the conservatory, Li became interested in the saxophone. Inspired by the popularity of dance hall bands as well as the tremendously popular music of Kenny G, Yusheng Li began to teach himself how to play the saxophone.<sup>42</sup> According to his son, Hantao Li, Professor Li spent hours at home

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<sup>37</sup> Liu, "Yusheng Li," 27.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>39</sup> Admin, "Li Yusheng (China)," *Clasax*, May 12, 2011, <http://www.clasax.org/festival-2011/international/li-yusheng/>.

<sup>40</sup> Li and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2.

<sup>41</sup> Liu, "Yusheng Li," 27.

<sup>42</sup> Li and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2.



teaching himself how to play the saxophone.<sup>43</sup> In spite of the dearth of information about classical saxophone, and the common understanding that the instrument could only be used for popular music and jazz, as a musician, Li naturally sensed that it could play more serious concert music. This sense was confirmed when, in 1990, Yusheng Li made the long, two-day trip by train to hear Paul Brodie perform in Beijing.<sup>44</sup>

Following Paul Brodie's second trip to China in 1992, Yusheng Li was able to make arrangements to study with Brodie in Canada. In 1993, Li traveled to Canada and began his first formal saxophone study at the Royal Academy of Toronto.<sup>45</sup> Li completed his program in 1996, with the title Fellow of the Royal Saxophone Performer, making him the first Chinese musician to do so.<sup>46</sup>

After completing the performer's certificate program in Toronto, Yusheng Li returned to China in 1996. During his time away, Sichuan Conservatory held his position as professor. Shortly after his return, Li began to suggest that the conservatory allow him to start a saxophone program. From the beginning, this proposition was a difficult one due to the ingrained preconceptions about the saxophone as only an instrument for popular music. Perhaps serendipitously, his return coincided with a time in which the conservatory began to seriously consider creating a more robust department devoted to the study of Western music and instruments. Although there were many people knowledgeable and capable of teaching Western instruments, Yusheng's time abroad,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.; Liu, "Yusheng Li," 27.

<sup>45</sup> Liu, "Yusheng Li," 27; Li and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2.

<sup>46</sup> Liu, "Yusheng Li," 27.

studying with a Western teacher made him an outlier. During this time, most people who studied Western instruments did so on their own and without formal training. Although initially met with much resistance, and having had to demonstrate through several performances the saxophone's merits as a classical instrument, the administrators eventually relented, and, in 1997 allowed him to move to the department of orchestral instruments to establish China's first conservatory program for classical saxophone. In the beginning, the program was small, starting with only three students; nevertheless, since then the program has grown markedly, with on average, more than fifty students. Li still teaches at the conservatory, but now with several assistant professors who assist him with the considerable teaching duties.<sup>47</sup>

### **Xin Gao: China's First Classical Saxophone Student**

Dr. Xin Gao began his musical studies when he was eight years old, and like his future teacher Yusheng Li, Gao's first musical instrument was not the saxophone — it was the clarinet. Possibly due to the changing culture surrounding the study of Western instruments in China, when Xin Gao began studying the clarinet he did so with a private teacher; and, at thirteen years old, when he made the switch to saxophone, he did so with the guidance of newly minted saxophone professor Yusheng Li. Although the creation of a saxophone program at Sichuan had been sanctioned by the administrators, in the early stages, Li had to create the demand for students by any means necessary. In this case, it meant convincing a talented young clarinetist to switch to the saxophone. At the age of thirteen, Gao auditioned for the Sichuan Conservatory's pre-college

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

program as a clarinetist. After being admitted and receiving one of the three scholarships for tuition remittance, he found out that two of the three scholarships had been given to clarinetists and that the school preferred that these types of awards be distributed more evenly among the different instrumental programs. It was at that time that Yusheng Li offered him the opportunity to learn a different instrument and to take part in the newly formed saxophone class. According to Gao, he knew almost nothing about the saxophone, but was attracted to its visual appeal. Despite his lack of knowledge, Gao and his family decided that it was a gamble worth taking, and in 1997 he became Yusheng Li's first saxophone student at Sichuan Conservatory.<sup>48</sup>

During this period, finding a quality saxophone to play could prove to be a formidable challenge. Fortunately, Gao was able to purchase a quality Japanese instrument (a Yamaha 62) to begin his studies as a saxophonist. The options available to most Chinese saxophone students at the time consisted of student model Yamaha instruments or saxophones made by Chinese manufacturers that tended to be inferior in quality. In the intervening years, this has become less of an issue as the ubiquity of the saxophone has increased and China's openness to the West has become more pronounced.<sup>49</sup>

Xin Gao completed his pre-collegiate studies at Sichuan Conservatory as well as one year of undergraduate studies. Following his initial year of collegiate study, he, like his teacher, traveled to the United States to study, where he enrolled at Duquesne

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<sup>48</sup> Xin Gao and Sheldon Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 1, September 20, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

University to study with renowned tenor saxophonist and pedagogue, James Houlik. Since coming to the United States, Xin Gao has completed his musical studies, earning a bachelor's and master's degree from Duquesne University (with an intervening year of study with Connie Frigo at the University of Tennessee). Recently, he completed his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro under the mentorship of Dr. Steven Stusek. Dr. Xin Gao currently serves as the adjunct saxophone professor at East Tennessee State University and as saxophone instructor at The Music Academy of North Carolina.<sup>50</sup>

### **Hantao Li: Inheriting A Legacy**

Hantao Li was born in 1984 to a musical family and is the son of China's first saxophone professor, Yusheng Li. Before following in his father's footsteps as a saxophonist, Hantao began his musical studies on the clarinet and piano. At the age of ten, Hantao began playing the saxophone, taking lessons with his father. Like many young Chinese saxophonists, Hantao's first saxophone was a used, Chinese-made instrument purchased by his father. Named after a famous Chinese musician and conservatory in China, the Xing Hai brand according to Hantao, no longer makes saxophones, but at the time was a less expensive alternative to the well-known foreign saxophone brands. Purchased for two-hundred yuan (approximately thirty USD in today's money), a large sum in China at the time, the instrument was in very poor condition when it was purchased in the 1990s. Fortunately, while studying in Canada,

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.; "Xin Gao," accessed February 13, 2017, [http://www.etsu.edu/cas/music/faculty\\_staff/gaox02.php](http://www.etsu.edu/cas/music/faculty_staff/gaox02.php).

Hantao's father had also learned enough about instrument repair, to make the Xing Hai saxophone serviceable. While in middle school, Hantao upgraded to an intermediate level saxophone; a Yamaha 32 that his father purchased for two-thousand dollars (USD). Mr. Li currently performs on a Selmer Series III saxophone that was purchased for him prior to beginning his collegiate musical studies, a testament to the commitment of Chinese parents to their children's educational development, especially considering China's one-child policy.<sup>51</sup>

Unlike many Chinese students—including Xin Gao—who are seriously interested in musical studies, Hantao did not enroll in any conservatory-affiliated programs prior to starting college; instead, electing to pursue a more traditional academic course of study in middle and high school prior to university. During his final year of high school, Li auditioned for and was admitted to the Sichuan Conservatory's saxophone studio where he completed his bachelor's degree.<sup>52</sup>

Following the completion of his studies at Sichuan Conservatory, Hantao traveled to the United States to continue his musical training; completing a performer's certificate program at Bowling Green State University with Dr. John Sampen and a master's degree at Ithaca College with Dr. Steven Mauk. Mr. Li is currently completing his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Iowa with Dr. Kenneth Tse, and

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<sup>51</sup> Liu, "Yusheng Li," 28; Li and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2.

<sup>52</sup> Li and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2.

also holds a faculty position at Sichuan Conservatory where he intends to return following the completion of his studies in the United States.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Development of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy**

Although the French school of saxophone pedagogy has left its fingerprints on many saxophone traditions around the world, in the beginning, it was the North American saxophone tradition that left its distinct and lasting mark in China. Owing largely to the visits of Canadian saxophonist Paul Brodie, the literature and pedagogical methods used by teachers like Yusheng Li skewed heavily towards the American school.<sup>54</sup> Early on, American standards such as sonatas by Paul Creston and Bernhard Heiden along with methods by Larry Teal formed the canon of materials used in Sichuan Conservatory. Eventually, standard pieces by Jacques Ibert, Alexander Glazunov, and methods by Marcel Mule and others made their way into the catalogue of frequently taught pieces. Slower still, has been the adoption of avant-garde and contemporary music into the teaching tradition. Though closely associated with the saxophone in other countries, only in the past decade has a sincere interest to explore this kind of music developed, along with an audience interested in listening.<sup>55</sup>

Although initially inspired by the American school of saxophone playing, in practice the Chinese saxophone pedagogical culture has become suffused with aspects of Chinese culture that are not as standard in the American style of teaching. Both Xin and Hantao have observed in their experiences that the relationship between teacher

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Liu, "Yusheng Li," 28; Gao and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 1.

and student is balanced differently in China than in the United States. Although the teacher is viewed as a significant authority in America, Chinese cultural norms dictate that the teacher is beyond reproach and the absolute authority figure in situations of conflict or differences of opinion. Both men report that the primacy of technical mastery over interpretation and musical expression is another issue that separates the two pedagogical cultures.

Furthermore, as the Chinese saxophone tradition has developed over the past twenty years, divergent schools of thought and methodology within the Chinese tradition have inevitably emerged. This is particularly illustrated in the advice that Chinese teachers give their students about study abroad, with some viewing the French tradition as the primary and superior one, while others prefer to send their students to the United States. Teachers like Yusheng Li tend to send their students to the United States because of the abundance of degree-granting institutions, while teachers like Manlong Li (who founded the saxophone program at the Central Conservatory shortly after Yusheng Li established his) favor sending their students to European countries, in particular, France. According to Hantao Li, both viewpoints have their merits, but students who study in France specifically, often face more difficulties upon returning to China since few institutions are able to grant diplomas that are accepted in China.<sup>56</sup>

In the two decades since the establishment of the saxophone as an instrument worthy of serious study, many strides have been made and there is significant cause to be optimistic about the future of saxophone pedagogy in China. In the years following

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<sup>56</sup> Li and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2.

the introduction of saxophone classes at Sichuan Conservatory, others have followed suit, augmenting the educational options for young, aspiring Chinese saxophonists. In addition to many conservatories now offering a classical saxophone major, many now offer jazz as well since Xiaolu Zhang established the first jazz major at the Shanghai Conservatory.<sup>57</sup> China's relative openness to the West has allowed for a broad range of cross-cultural exchange between many different countries and teaching traditions, making the current Chinese school much less myopic than it was just ten years ago. In the fall of 2016, the process for establishing a nationwide professional saxophone association was initiated with the first meeting of what was dubbed the "Chinese College and Conservatory Saxophone Symposium," in order to better coordinate the development of the Chinese tradition going forward. Due to the rapid development and maturation of the country's pedagogical tradition, as well as the popularity of the instrument, both Hantao Li and Xin Gao envision China as one of the next big centers not only for aspiring Chinese saxophonists to study, but for students from the West as well. Considering the sizable saxophone classes at conservatories like Sichuan as well as the fast-paced development of a venerable tradition, the groundwork is quickly being laid to make such a future possible.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Gao and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 1; Li and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2.



Table 2.1 Notable Current Chinese Saxophone Teachers<sup>59</sup>

<b>Institution, Location</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
Beijing Academy of Performing Arts, Beijing	Jianan Zhang
Central Conservatory, Beijing	Tong Yang
Chinese Conservatory, Beijing	Manlong Li
Shanghai Conservatory, Shanghai	Xiaolu Zhang (Jazz)
Shenyang Conservatory, Shenyang	Yang Zhao
Sichuan Conservatory, Chengdu	Yusheng Li
Wuhan Conservatory, Wuhan City	Kun Ao

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<sup>59</sup> Xin Gao, "Interview Transcript and Consent Form - Sheldonjohnsonsc@gmail.com - Gmail," accessed February 17, 2017, <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/xin+gao/157b019488e62981>; Li and Johnson, Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy 2.

## **Chapter 3**

# **The History of the Saxophone and Saxophone Pedagogy in the Former Soviet Union**

### **The Saxophone and Jazz in Post-Revolutionary Russia**

The history of the saxophone and its pedagogy in the former Soviet Union has a long arc; and, in hindsight, hints of its plight were evident by the end of the Great War. As has been the case in many countries, the history of the saxophone is inextricably bound up with the history of jazz in the Soviet Union. The long and rocky road towards acceptance, with stretches of formal rejection began in the years following the Bolshevik Revolution that roiled Russia in October of 1917.<sup>60</sup> Though the United States and Russia had both been a part of the coalition aimed at defeating the Central Powers in World War I, the relationship between the two countries became increasingly knotty in the years after the war's end. This complication of the relationship stemmed in large part from the divergent nature of the two revolutions that were occurring inside each nation's borders. In Russia, an all-encompassing top-down socio-political revolution continued to unfold, while in the United States, a popular revolution from the bottom

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<sup>60</sup> S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917-1980*, First Edition edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 12.

up was emerging, due in large part to the explosion in popularity of a new musical art form, jazz.<sup>61</sup>

That jazz and the eventual proletarian dictatorship in Russia would ultimately prove to be strange bedfellows can be gleaned from the diametrically opposed aims of each. The oft-touted American spirit of individual liberty and expression is at the very heart of jazz's nature. With its heavy reliance on solos and improvisation, the individualistic nature of jazz placed it in stark opposition to the desire of the ruling Bolshevik party to cultivate a strictly proletarian culture suited to the masses that would emancipate it from the whims of public taste.<sup>62</sup> About the early reception of jazz, scholar S. Frederick Starr says,

To performers and audience alike, the glory or baseness of jazz at its inception was its raucousness and utter indifference to the niceties of nineteenth-century musical etiquette. This was a music in which horn players deliberately bent notes off pitch, in which drummers played at once whole sets of noisemakers including cymbals and Chinese tom-toms, in which the newly popular slide trombone was permitted to smear notes together in guttural glissandos, and in which—and this was the worst of all—that obnoxiously nasal misfit, the saxophone, was actually received as an equal partner.<sup>63</sup>

For better or for worse, that the saxophone was so closely linked with the freedom of personal expression embodied by jazz only solidified the fact that the reception of each would be closely linked with that of the other. Despite these differences, the new American art form initially showed some promise in Russia, with the government's

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 10–12.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 16, 18.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 9.

ruling party being largely split over how to interpret and propagandize the music.<sup>64</sup> The initial party responses to jazz in the 1920s were formed from afar, based on recordings rather than live performances with the American art form posing only a distant threat. However, just a few years later in 1925, the decadent Western music had become popular with the metropolitan elite in larger Soviet cities.<sup>65</sup>

The ambivalence of Soviet authorities was short-lived following Joseph Stalin's rise to power in the early 1920s; and, during the Cultural Revolution that ensued shortly thereafter, the official positions on jazz, and in turn, the saxophone quickly soured. Now more explicit than the efforts immediately following the 1917 revolution, under Stalin the suppression of popular art forms and those associated with them was much more explicit, and the Commissariat of Public Enlightenment and the Association of Proletarian Musicians performed their duties in a more heavy-handed manner than the earlier Artistic Control Commission. Although initially unsuccessful, in 1929 proletarian radicals launched a campaign to rid the Soviet Union of the saxophone, but in 1949 such a campaign proved successful and remained until after Stalin's death in 1953.<sup>66</sup> Curiously though, even in the face of the emerging hostility toward the saxophone that began in the late 1920s, it was during this time that the saxophone was used as an orchestral instrument in the music of Prokofiev and Shostakovich. Though acceptance was tepid at times, perhaps it was the subordinate function of the instrument in these

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 17, 53.

<sup>66</sup> Stacy Maugans, "The History of the Saxophone in St. Petersburg, Russia," *The Saxophone Symposium* 26 (2001): 56–57; Starr, *Red and Hot*, 83, 85; Lisa Booth, "Booth-Introduction-Kulturnost.pdf," accessed February 28, 2017, <http://sites.clas.ufl.edu/ces/files/Booth-Introduction-Kulturnost.pdf>.

two works that made its use tolerable.<sup>67</sup> As was typical of the times however, neither acceptance nor rejection persisted indefinitely; and, during the purges of the 1930s, Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kijé* was banned due to its use of saxophone.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, jazz was often derided as decadent and Western by important figures, while at other times being held up as the embodiment of proletarian ideals. The unsteady position of the government with regard to jazz, and by extension, the saxophone, made artistic life for individuals involved in such pursuits impossible to navigate at times. Furthermore, although the saxophone was often tolerated, finding an instrument could be a very difficult feat. According to one saxophonist at this time, there were only three saxophonists in all of Moscow in 1931.<sup>69</sup>

### **The Saxophone and Jazz Following the Second World War**

In the years following the Second World War, a second round of censure proved to be more effective than the first. Using the cultural litmus test of kul'turnost, the official measure of suitability of all things cultural, jazz and its associates were found wanting.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, with the Soviet rendering *dzhaz* (for jazz) having been rendered illegal to say in public, in 1949 the most complete repudiation of the saxophone was launched when all state-employed saxophonists were summoned with their instruments to the office of the State Variety Music Agency where their saxophones were confiscated and their identification cards amended to portray them as

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<sup>67</sup> Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 25; Maugans, "The History of the Saxophone in St. Petersburg, Russia," 56.

<sup>68</sup> Maugans, "The History of the Saxophone in St. Petersburg, Russia," 63.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 57; Starr, *Red and Hot*, 42; Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Booth, "Booth-Introduction-Kulturnost.pdf."

performers of various other instruments and expunging any record of them ever having been employed as saxophonists.<sup>71</sup> Fortunately, this government sanction of jazz and jazz-related elements was relatively short-lived, and likely due to the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. Following a period of timid uncertainty, jazz began to re-emerge in the years following Stalin's death; and, in 1956 the Soviet government was forced to officially revisit and revise its prohibition against it paving the way for future developments, including those not related to jazz.<sup>72</sup>

### **Classical Saxophone Comes to the Soviet Union**

Great orchestral works including the saxophone by composers such as Prokofiev notwithstanding, the saxophone as a serious concert instrument was virtually unknown in the Soviet Union in the years immediately following World War II. Similar to the importation from the West that would occur in China several years later, it would take trips by two Western saxophonists to convert the Soviet musical world into believers. The first occurred in 1961 when the University of Michigan Symphonic Band staged a tour of the USSR. During the tour, Soviet audiences perhaps for the first time, heard classical saxophone when University of Michigan saxophone student Donald Sinta performed Paul Creston's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Band*.<sup>73</sup> Although these initial hearings did not result in an immediate establishment of a distinctly Soviet classical saxophone tradition, given the length of the tour, the numerous cities visited,

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<sup>71</sup> Starr, *Red and Hot*, 215–16.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 235, 248, 259.

<sup>73</sup> Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 8.

and the generally positive reception of these concerts it is likely that Sinta's playing planted a seed that would blossom several years later.<sup>74</sup>

In 1970 the seeds planted by Donald Sinta's performances came to fruition when French Saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix, summoned by the composer Dmitri Kabalevsky, came to present concerts in the USSR. This second exposure to Western classical saxophone playing proved to be an important event in the history of the Russian classical saxophone tradition.<sup>75</sup> Londeix's tour of the USSR piqued the interests of composers and performers alike. The immediate aftermath of his performances inspired the composition of new Soviet works for the saxophone, including Edison Denisov's canonic staple *Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Piano* and sparked a lasting collaboration between Londeix and the famed Russian avant-garde composer. Furthermore, in the period following the performances, tangible efforts to create a significant Soviet school of classical saxophone playing were launched.<sup>76</sup> Initiated primarily by clarinetists and amateur saxophone players, classes for saxophone began to appear in Soviet conservatories. In 1970, clarinetist Lev Mikhailov established his saxophone class at the Moscow Conservatory, marking the first of its kind in the country. Shortly thereafter, Margarita Shaposhnikova established a class at the Gnesin Institute also in Moscow. Saxophone classes in various other conservatories in

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<sup>74</sup> "UM School of Music, Theatre & Dance - 1961 Russian Tour Band," accessed March 1, 2017, <http://www.music.umich.edu/1961symphonybandtour/index.html>; Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 8.

<sup>75</sup> Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 6–7.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–10.

Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk, and Saratov were also started, but the first two proved to be the most influential.<sup>77</sup>

### Early Soviet Saxophone Pedagogy

Though Londeix's trip to the USSR marked an important turning point for the saxophone in the country, including increased access to extant Western pedagogical materials, the relative isolation of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, combined with the scarcity of Western materials highlighted the dearth of Soviet teaching materials for the saxophone. In the ensuing years, the country's fledgling saxophone instructors would begin to create a repository of Soviet pedagogical materials with pioneers such as Lev Mikhailov and Aleksandr Rivchun leading the way. These various materials targeted players of all ability levels with topics covered ranging from basic music theory to the specifics of saxophone fingerings, articulations, ornamentations, and others. The most important of these is perhaps Lev Mikhailov's *Shkola igry na saksofone (School of Saxophone Playing)*.<sup>78</sup>

Despite its having been initially inspired by the French school of saxophone playing, in the years following the establishment of prominent saxophone classes in Moscow by Mikhailov and Shaposhnikova respectively, the Soviet style of playing appears to have begun to develop largely separate from significant Western influence. In the early days, the Soviet classical saxophone sound as described by Christopher Ford

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<sup>77</sup> Maugans, "The History of the Saxophone in St. Petersburg, Russia," 67; Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 10.

<sup>78</sup> Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 10–11; Maugans, "The History of the Saxophone in St. Petersburg, Russia," 68–69.



was typically much brighter than that of French saxophonists, with vibrato used much more sparingly. This difference of sonic conception can also be heard in the early Soviet saxophone quartet aesthetic. Compared to the soprano saxophone-centric sound that was typical of French quartets such as the Marcel Mule Quartet, early Soviet quartets like the Moscow Saxophone Quartet tended towards a more egalitarian use of the four voices.<sup>79</sup> Although the relative independence of Russian pedagogy has persisted to a degree, due to globalization and increased—though still limited—interaction with the West, the general Russian style of classical saxophone playing is no longer as obviously divergent from an aesthetic point of view than that of the French and other international schools of playing.

### **Later Soviet/Russian Pedagogy and Pedagogues**

#### **Margarita Shaposhnikova**

In the years following the establishment of the first saxophone classes in the Soviet Union, it would be the second class, established by Margarita Shaposhnikova that would have the greatest influence both locally and globally on the direction and perception of the Russian classical saxophone school. Beginning in the late 1970s, Shaposhnikova's students from the Gnesin Academy began to make their mark on the Soviet musical scene by becoming perennial prizewinners at national competitions such

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<sup>79</sup> Ford, *The State of Concert Saxophone Pedagogy, Performance, and Composition in the Soviet Union*, 16–17.

as the All-Union Woodwind Competition, and later, the All-Russian Woodwind competition.<sup>80</sup>

Like most early Soviet saxophone instructors, Ms. Shaposhnikova is a primarily self-taught saxophonist. She received her musical training as a clarinetist studying at the Saratov Musical College and Gnesin Academy where she currently teaches.<sup>81</sup> Although relatively unknown in the West, through the successes of her students in international competitions recently, she has begun to elevate the presence of the Russian school of saxophone playing on the international stage. According to her most famous former student Sergey Kolesov, the pedagogy of Margarita Shaposhnikova is intentionally eclectic and tailored to the needs of individual students. The core of the saxophone class' curriculum is made up of original works for saxophone by French, American, and Russian composers as well as transcriptions from the repertoire of orchestral instruments. Although Ms. Shaposhnikova tirelessly and deftly works with her students on the technical minutiae of saxophone playing, curiously downplayed in her pedagogical approach are method books of any kind, despite having written one herself.<sup>82</sup> Instead, students of Ms. Shaposhnikova focus primarily on the varied solo repertoire. Where appropriate, Ms. Shaposhnikova favors a multi-disciplinary approach, deferring to experts in other musical areas to help her students achieve the best possible results. The success of her approach is evidenced by the fact that two of the

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<sup>80</sup> Maugans, "The History of the Saxophone in St. Petersburg, Russia," 70.

<sup>81</sup> Sergey Kolesov and Jonathan Kammer, Interview on the History of Russian Saxophone Pedagogy, 2016; "Margarita Shaposhnikova | Saint Petersburg Music House," accessed February 28, 2017, <http://eng.spdm.ru/margarita-shaposhnikova>.

<sup>82</sup> Kolesov and Kammer, Interview on the History of Russian Saxophone Pedagogy; Maugans, *The History of Saxophone and Saxophone Music in St. Petersburg, Russia*, 47.

last three first prizewinners at the Adolphe Sax Competition in Dinant, Belgium—Sergey Kolesov and Nikita Zimin respectively—have been students of hers at Gnesin Academy.<sup>83</sup>

### **First on the International Stage: Sergey Kolesov**

Originally from Vologda Oblast, Sergey Kolesov began playing the saxophone at the age of thirteen. Having previously finished musical college (middle school) as a violinist, switching to the saxophone was not his idea, but that of the director of the musical school at which he had studied. Although initially reluctant, Sergey began studying the saxophone with a local teacher named Sergey Kuznetsov who introduced him to various musical styles beyond the classical music he had studied as a violinist; and, he quickly realized that he wanted to make a career for himself as a saxophone player. Though the instrument was becoming more popular amongst young students, finding an instrument was often still a challenge. Sergey's first instrument was a Czech tenor saxophone made by Amati and the only one available for purchase in his hometown. In these first years as a saxophonist, Sergey studied and played both jazz and classical music, uncertain of how he viewed his musical future as a saxophonist.<sup>84</sup>

It was while listening to a recording of Margarita Shaposhnikova playing Russian composer Mikhail Gottlieb's concerto for saxophone that Sergey was inspired to dedicate himself to becoming a first-class concert saxophonist; and, a few years later he

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<sup>83</sup> "Biography | Nikita Zimin," accessed March 3, 2017, <http://nikita-zimin.com/biography-2/>; "Biography Sergey Kolesov," accessed March 3, 2017, <http://www.sergeykolesov.com/en/>; "Margarita Shaposhnikova | Saint Petersburg Music House."

<sup>84</sup> Kolesov and Kammer, Interview on the History of Russian Saxophone Pedagogy.

would have the opportunity to enter the Gnesin Academy to study with Ms. Shaposhnikova who accepts a maximum of two students each year.<sup>85</sup>

According to Kolesov, the opportunity to study with Shaposhnikova was a particularly fortuitous occurrence in his educational career. When he entered Gnesin Academy he was quite confident in his musical abilities, but less so about his technical prowess on the saxophone, crediting his time studying with her to helping him to develop into the eminently capable performer that he is, culminating with his 2006 victory at the Adolphe Sax Competition.<sup>86</sup>

In the years since his grand-prix win in Dinant, Kolesov has gone on to win several other international competitions and to make a name for himself as both a performer and pedagogue, continuously raising the profile of the Russian classical saxophone school. At present, he teaches in Moscow at the state university helping to develop the next generation of young Russian saxophone talent. As a teacher, Kolesov has inherited many of Shaposhnikova's pedagogical sensibilities, shying away from many of the pedantic teaching materials that are commonplace in other saxophone traditions, but he has also crafted a personal style of teaching that is more reflective of his own personality. Kolesov prefers a more psychological approach; his is a holistic methodology that seeks to address the entirety of the student's musical journey. About his own teaching Kolesov says

for this moment in my life, I am not paying too much attention to the technical skills. Of course, yes, but not like Margarita Shaposhnikova because she's really

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

very scrupulous. To work with a person, with a personality is very interesting. To see the music that he or she prefers to play, how the music develops their personality. That is very important for me. And also, of course I give some technical secrets, but for me the psychological moments are the most interesting for me. And it's a powerful skill as a teacher.<sup>87</sup>

In this way, he hopes to address the issue of emphasis on technical perfection over musicality and expression that he sees as being too prevalent in other national saxophone traditions.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Future of the Russian Saxophone School**

Russian saxophone playing of late has taken on a decidedly more cosmopolitan character compared with its early beginnings. This is especially true with young players such as Nikita Zimin and Evgeny Novikov, who pursued studies in Europe after their formative years in Russia.<sup>89</sup> These developments notwithstanding, the Russian school at present is still ostensibly more insular than that of countries who developed a saxophone tradition relatively late, including China. Additionally, compared to other countries with a robust tradition, the avant-garde works that have become synonymous with the saxophone elsewhere have not yet found a consistent place with performers or audiences in Russia.<sup>90</sup>

Looking forward, people like Kolesov have good reason to be optimistic about the future of the Russian saxophone tradition. According to him, many of the young students in Russia, including his own, are already playing at a higher level than he and

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> "Biography | Nikita Zimin"; "Keuris Quartet," *KEURIS QUARTET*, accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.keurisquartet.com/about>.

<sup>90</sup> Kolesov and Kammer, Interview on the History of Russian Saxophone Pedagogy.

his peers did at the same age, which according to him is a sign of the fine pedagogical activity in his country.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Table 3.1 Notable Current and Former Soviet/Russian Saxophone Teachers<sup>92</sup>

<b>Institution, Location</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
Gnesin Academy, Moscow	Margarita Shaposhnikova
Moscow Conservatory, Moscow	Lev Mikhailov (Saxophone classes no longer offered)
Moscow State University, Moscow	Sergey Kolesov
Nizhny Novgorod Conservatory, Nizhniy Novgorod	Alexander Mutuzkin
St. Petersburg Conservatory, St. Petersburg	Anatoly Vapirov (1976-1982)
St. Petersburg Conservatory, St. Petersburg	Andrey Bolshiyarov (Classes intermittent)
Tambov State Rachmaninoff Institute of Music, Tambov	Alexander Borodin

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.; “International Jazz Festival-Summer Varna,” accessed March 3, 2017, [http://www.vsfjbg.com/vapirov-800x600\\_E.htm](http://www.vsfjbg.com/vapirov-800x600_E.htm); “Andrey Bolshiyarov | Saint Petersburg Music House,” accessed March 1, 2017, <http://eng.spdm.ru/andrey-bolshiyarov>; Maugans, “The History of the Saxophone in St. Petersburg, Russia,” 71; “Бородин А.Н.,” accessed March 3, 2017, <http://rachmaninov.ru/institut/personalii/borodin-aleksandr-nikolaevich>; “КАФЕДРА ДЕРЕВЯННЫХ ДУХОВЫХ ИНСТРУМЕНТОВ - Нижегородская Государственная Консерватория Им. М.И. Глинки,” accessed March 1, 2017, <http://nnovcons.ru/index.php?file=iPage16.php>.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Conclusion**

In a comparatively short period, both the saxophone traditions of China and the Former Soviet Union have made tremendous strides in developing a serious and respectable tradition of classical saxophone playing and teaching. Having both been inspired to develop national saxophone heritages as the result of foreign influence, the two countries set about doing so in markedly different ways, with the Chinese tradition having begun sending students abroad sooner and also developing in a much more direct and linear fashion. As the first academic institution in China to establish a saxophone class, Sichuan Conservatory's saxophone class has flourished and continues to educate many promising young saxophonists year after year. Conversely, Russia's first institution to offer a saxophone program, Moscow Conservatory, no longer offers a class. Similarly, the class at St. Petersburg Conservatory established by Anatoly Vapirov and continued by Andrey Bolshiyarov has over the years, only offered a saxophone class intermittently.<sup>93</sup> Despite these inconsistencies, the saxophone classes of Margarita Shaposhnikova at the Gnesin Academy have continuously produced an especially high caliber of saxophone player, and at its best has produced players unrivaled by any of the Chinese institutions.

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<sup>93</sup> Maugans, "The History of the Saxophone in St. Petersburg, Russia," 71.



According to all parties interviewed in the course of this research the future is very promising in both countries. This document has presented a modest overview of the recent and present trajectories of these traditions. Due to the continuous globalization and shrinking of the musical world, the situation in each country is extremely dynamic in nature and the need for further study and updating will be perpetually required. Imminent research on the history of the saxophone in China such as that of Hantao Li, who was interviewed during the preparation of this document, will likely further contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the saxophone in China given the author's bilingualism, personal knowledge of the subject, and increased access to people and materials related to the topic.

Similarly, with more Russian students choosing to study abroad in recent years, future research will be better positioned to draw conclusions about the long-term effects of such a trend on the insular nature of the current Russian school of saxophone playing. Moreover, the as yet unknown future socio-political situations of both countries may prove to have serious effects on the future developments of the countries' saxophone traditions.

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## **Appendix A: Xin Gao Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy**

**Dr. Xin Gao**  
**Narrator**

**Sheldon Johnson**  
**Interviewer**

**September 20, 2016**  
**University of North Carolina at Greensboro College of Visual and Performing Arts**

**Sheldon Johnson:** I am here with Dr. Xin Gao, who is assisting and has agreed to be interviewed as part of my research for my doctoral document. So, we are going to be talking a little bit about his knowledge and his experiences as a student of the saxophone in China.

**Xin Gao:** Thank you Sheldon. This is my great pleasure to be here to answer your questions.

**SJ:** Where are you originally from in China?

**XG:** I am originally from Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, People's Republic of China.

**SJ:** When did you begin your musical studies?

**XG:** I began my musical studies when I was eight years old. I started on the clarinet. I started taking private lessons at that age. And then I switched to saxophone when I was thirteen. That was also the year that I began my pre-college study in music. The pre-college was affiliated with the Sichuan Conservatory of Music.

**SJ:** So if I understand correctly, you did your pre-college studies as well as what we would call undergrad here at the Sichuan Conservatory?

**XG:** Yes, one year of undergrad. After that, I moved to Pittsburgh.

**SJ:** So in Pittsburgh you were doing what, exactly?

**XG:** I was in undergrad at Duquesne University.

**SJ:** Ok, so you did your undergrad there?

**XG:** Yes, undergrad there and first year of masters at the University of Tennessee when Connie Frigo was there. After that year Connie Frigo moved to the [Washington] D.C. area so I went back to Duquesne University to finish my master's degree. So, I completed both my bachelors and master's degrees in music at Duquesne University.

**SJ:** And was James Houlik there the entire time while you were a student?

**XG:** Yes, the entire time. Houlik was the one who brought me here to the [United] States, and Duquesne was the only school to which I applied. He did a tour of China and gave masterclasses and recitals, and of course I played for him. I think he made two trips, in fact. I believe it was 2000 and 2002 and we established this connection and decided to proceed to have me apply to Duquesne and start the procedures for bringing me to the [United] States to study.

**SJ:** You talked before about the fact that you started on the clarinet rather than the saxophone, so can you just talk a little bit about how and why you decided to make the transition from clarinet to saxophone?

**XG:** The transition is actually a bit of a funny story. My parents started to see my music talents as I was studying the clarinet so they encouraged me to audition for this pre-college program that had been established at the Sichuan Conservatory. So, I used clarinet to do the audition and they had a tuition waiver for the first three places. I got second, which was very lucky. I then found out that the first two places were both clarinet students. The policy was such that they liked to try to offer those things to different instruments. So, they still wanted me to attend and offer me the opportunity, which was something like six years' tuition free. Then Yusheng Li had just come back from his study in Canada and tried to establish a new studio, a saxophone studio at the Sichuan Conservatory. He said he would take new students who were interested. I knew nothing about the saxophone at the time. I just saw that it was a shiny looking instrument and very attractive looking. The sound I initially did not know anything about; not jazz, classical, or anything.

**SJ:** So you were a blank slate essentially?

**XG:** Absolutely. I think at the time, the Chinese, especially in Chengdu City, all we knew about the saxophone was probably Kenny G. The smooth jazz style of popular music and even with that I had not listened to it very much. But we decided that we would do it.

**SJ:** Right. So it was kind of a complete gamble?

**XG:** Yes, it was kind of a gamble.

**SJ:** So, were you kind of unique amongst your friends in that regard?

**XG:** Sort of, but after a few weeks of study I just immediately fell in love with the saxophone.

**SJ:** When I ask if you were unique, was the saxophone at all popular for other students to start with in school bands or any other places in China that you know of?

**XG:** Good question. Yes, China has school bands, but not quite in middle school. Elementary school, yes. Each elementary school usually has their very own marching band and play politically related music. In the middle school, it is a very different situation than here, in that, people are all very concentrated on academic study to prepare for something like the SAT test at the end of that. And that test is extremely important for all students trying to get into college. The score decides everything. You rarely see a middle or high school that has a band program.

**SJ:** Interesting.

**XG:** So what I did, someone who decides to take on music professionally, these are typically all people who take private lessons. They usually study the instrument privately or they and their families are involved with one of the conservatories.

**SJ:** So, when you first started, you knew nothing about the sound or anything and it is time to pick out an instrument, what was your first saxophone that you began on?

**XG:** It was easy to make a sound, because I had just studied clarinet for about four years at that time. I remember how hard it was to make the first sound on clarinet. So, when I picked up the saxophone I had the preparation with all of the similarities of a single reed instrument; but still when I made the first sound I just felt like “wow, this is easy. This is nice playing.” And of course, I realized that the next challenge that comes is to make a good tone on the saxophone. But for the initial impression of the saxophone, it was comfortable, just naturally comfortable.

**SJ:** Now what brand did you start on? Did you go right to Selmer? I see that you have a Selmer case.

**XG:** I have a Selmer case, but I have a Yamaha instrument. This is my second horn. The first was a Yamaha 62.

**SJ:** Wow. So that is what you started on?

**XG:** That is what I started on. I was lucky to have very supportive parents and they knew that I was going to study music professionally even during my pre-collegiate studies. It was a very focused program so they wanted me to start with a professional instrument. I loved that [Yamaha] 62. I got this one, the old custom, without the EX, they call that the 875, I got this one right before I came to the United States. So it is roughly about fourteen or fifteen years old.

**SJ:** Well, it's obviously been well-maintained and will last for quite a while. You say that you were fortunate to have very supportive parents, but do you think that it was popular for the average young player in the late 1990s to begin on a professional instrument?

**XG:** For students that were beginning the Yamaha AS100 was a popular instrument as well as the [Yamaha] 62.

**SJ:** Did you often come across any Chinese-made saxophones that younger, maybe less experienced students might have started on?

**XG:** Yes, absolutely. The brands varied, there were many different brands. I remember trying one that was poorly made, but in recent years I have had the chance to try a few that are marked improvements over previous models.

**SJ:** So from what I gather, the saxophone is relatively new to the conservatory, compared to other instruments, especially other instruments that have been taught for longer in the West. What, if anything, can you speak to about the history of the saxophone in China? You mention that you jumped on board at the conservatory right as Professor Li was coming back from his studies abroad.

**XG:** Yes, that's my own story, but in China things were a little bit different. In general, the Chinese knew about the saxophone because of clubs with popular music, sometimes even jazz. This was happening sometime around the end of the last dynasty, the Qing dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, the ending of the last empire and the beginning of the democracy at the time. Shanghai was the first port that opened to the West and that is where all of the foreigners come in, and also all other cultures including music. So jazz was kind of big at the time. Popular night club music was how the Chinese first were made aware of the saxophone and it has been like that, so many Chinese people's main impression of the saxophone was created through this kind of music. So when they heard the word "saxophone" they immediately related everything to that kind of music. My knowledge about the classical saxophone in China comes mainly from my experiences as a student, having learned a lot about it in my academic program. When I started studying saxophone with Yusheng Li, that was really the starting line for classical saxophone in China, around those few years. As I told you before, I was the first student of that program established in the Sichuan Conservatory. I think around that time, in the major conservatories they all started to have saxophone



programs. I do not know the exact year(s), but it was around this time that they started to have more information about the classical saxophone and tried to form programs. Yusheng Li brought a lot back from Paul Brodie in Canada, I think he spent two years there and he brought back a lot of information.

**SJ:** So, you mention that the saxophone [in China], like in many other countries, including this one, amongst people outside of what we do, the saxophone is generally more closely associated with more popular types of music and also jazz; what, if any experience or contact with those other types of music did you have in China? Or was it pretty much strictly a program of study based on Western Classical music?

**XG:** Yes, for me it was, pretty strictly. I only had here and there a couple of gigs that required me to play popular music, but barely. However, I know people who are doing that for their livelihood in China. So even before me, people were already playing and studying the saxophone intensively, but they had a very different focus.

**SJ:** So, is it pretty safe to assume that when we talk about the different types of literature and the pieces that would have been a part of your curriculum as a student in the pre-college program and during your year of undergrad, was it mostly the kind of standard French fare and pieces like the Glazunov, etc.?

**XG:** Yes. What you know here is exactly what I experienced in the pre-college program with Yusheng Li. So I was lucky as I said, in many ways. I started on what I just believe was the right track. However, there were some differences [laughs], Mr. Li liked to put some hard stuff on young students. I played Creston and Ibert when I was in middle school.

**SJ:** Wow!

**XG:** It is just, I think it is kind of a characteristic of Chinese music education. They start on the hard études and the hard repertoire in order to see if the student can really handle it. Most of the time we go with the technique first. So they use the hard program in order to achieve that purpose.

**SJ:** So, scales and études were also a part of your regiment?

**XG:** I would say scales were even primary. I remember being told, “if you don’t have any time to practice, you have to go through your scales.” So scales, études, and then you go through your repertoire. People could get kicked out of the lesson if they did not play their scales well. You go through your scales first in the lessons to see if you have improved or maintained, and then we talk about the rest.

**SJ:** Now, would these scales have been done in the full range like *Les Gammes* the [Jean-Marie] Londeix book?

**XG:** The full range. We started with the full range; but as I say, my situation was kind of different. I had fundamental things with clarinet from the time that I switched so I was a lot more comfortable with many things. I would say however, that when I teach younger students, I generally do not start with the full range, but for me it was. Full range in the first lesson. Very strict, a lot of things were compact in the short amount of time. I think that I was able to improve so much in a short amount of time because of that kind of strength of the training.

**SJ:** When you think about some of the pedagogical materials that were used, I mentioned *Les Gammes* as far as scale books go, but as far as methods or études, what were some of the books that you started out with if you can remember? Maybe *Ferling [48 Famous Studies]*?

**XG:** *Ferling*, yes, but I didn't play *Ferling*, but *Ferling* was a standard at the time. *Klosé [25 Daily Exercises for Saxophone]*, of course Marcel Mule's books those are great.

**SJ:** Like *Berbiguer [18 Studies After Berbiguer]* and some of the others?

**XG:** Yes, all of those. What we use here [in the United States] is what we used there. The standard repertoire, *Creston Sonata*, *Heiden Sonata*, *Glazunov*, *Ibert*, *Muczynski*, etc.

**SJ:** Wonderful. So, we've established that a lot of the teaching materials were almost or exactly identical to what is standard here in the United States. As far as pedagogical approaches and the quirks that individuals have as teachers and the individual stamp that they put on their own teaching style, is there anything in comparing what you've experienced now at three different institutions here in the United States versus what you experienced in China, that might have been the same or different, particularly with regard to the ways that teachers approach their students?

**XG:** What I would say is, each culture [both China and the United State] has all of the aspects, all of them are included the pedagogy, but one is probably more focused on than the other. In the States, we all have discipline and training and the encouragement of creativity and also musicality. In China, the most important of those is discipline. That is really what they focus on. I think that this is true for many other instruments as well. This may be one of the reasons that you see a lot of Asian kids that play violin and piano so well and winning competitions. My experience with Mr. Li was like that too. The relationships between students and teachers are more unequal than here in the states. In China, the teacher has absolute authority. This has two results, the student will do whatever the teacher says, and that's what is supposed to happen. The good thing is, the student will work very hard just trying to accomplish all of their tasks. Practicing a lot and trying to establish discipline and attain a high level of training with regard to the technical aspects of playing. The disadvantage, I would say, has to do with the musicality training. Students are less likely to follow their heart to enjoy the music making. But those are just general observations, of course there are students who are good at all

aspects. In the States, discipline is always encouraged, but I would say the encouragement of creativity and creative thinking and critical thinking too are much more of a unique thing here.

**SJ:** Interesting. As one of the pioneers, as a student at least, did you witness any of the struggles to kind of push to have the saxophone accepted by other instrumentalists, other teachers, can you talk a little about that, as well as what the opportunities were for performances? Were they plentiful, did you have to hunt to find ways of presenting your craft to people outside of the school?

**XG:** Good question. Plentiful for sure, a lot of performance opportunities. The market in China is huge from that time I started, and now it has expanded. It's getting so popular. Regarding gaining acceptance by other instrumentalists, I personally didn't find much of a problem, but I did experience people looking at us differently than others because it was different, it was just never there in the traditional conservatory setting in China.

**SJ:** And so, all of a sudden it is?

**XG:** All of a sudden it is; it's French. To many people it was kind of mind opening, but also there were some questions asked, you know? Because it is new, people don't have a standard understanding of what "good" is supposed to be. All other instruments have centuries ahead of the saxophone, they already know what to expect, but for saxophone there were debates. There was, "what's good, what's bad?" It's still going, and I think in many other countries too.

**SJ:** Yes. Vibrato [both laughing]?

**XG:** Yes, something like that. But, what I want to re-articulate is that it was very quickly accepted by others and has become very popular so quickly, just regarding classical saxophone.

**SJ:** Now, you know, one thing that I know I have experienced, and maybe you have as well here in the United States is a big push to be well-rounded. The market here is kind of different. Acceptance has ebbed and flowed; it's different in different regions. So where we are now, there's a big push to be well-rounded, especially regarding jazz versus classical; a push to be competent in both areas. It doesn't seem from what I have researched that that was necessarily the case when you were starting out [in China]. Is that true and has that changed or mostly stayed the same in the past twenty years or so?

**XG:** It has changed, and it is still changing. What can I say? It's kind of back and forth. Let's talk from the beginning, people got to know about the classical saxophone through popular music. When they want to go and hear a saxophone performance, they imagine popular music, "let's go hear that," or jazz or Kenny G; that type of music. "Oh that's

good, let's go listen to that!" When they realize, "oh, classical saxophone, this is a different kind of music," they don't even really try to learn about all of this classical saxophone, they just realize that it's different and sometimes realize, "hey, I guess this sounds good." So it's gradually getting to this area. For many years, classical saxophone education in China has had a huge boom. People are suddenly just all starting to study it; and right now, I would say that you are asking this question at a very interesting time. People who are studying classical saxophone are starting to realize that, "hey, we have another side of saxophone, let's keep that going. We learned about saxophone this way, let's don't forget." So we are talking about just these few years. I would say two to three years, of course jazz has been in China, but not like these past two to three years. People are starting to spend a lot of money to invest on events to invite world-class jazz musicians to go to China for performances and masterclasses. It's just happened in the past few years, actually. So, right now it's kind of a big, like huge movement for both. And I've just heard, Shaolin is a very typical kung fu practice and it's kind of mystical even for the Chinese too, and they just had a big saxophone event held in a temple in China. It just happened a few weeks ago. They invited more than twenty world-class jazz saxophonists to be there and play concerts and masterclasses. A lot of kids went. It's huge. I've never heard of anything like this before.

**SJ:** Right, so this came as a surprise, and this maybe kind of made it visible to a wider audience?

**XG:** Oh, absolutely! And if you need those things to be cited I can send you the exact names and links for examples.

**SJ:** Great! So we are getting to the end here, just a couple more questions here. Obviously, when we look at the history of classical saxophone, you know, we end up in France and looking at modern French saxophone culture, the avant-garde and experimental music is hugely popular and to maybe a slightly lesser extent in the United States and also in a different way, often times, and in other places in Western Europe, what role if any, has the avant-garde played in the development of the saxophone in China? And maybe, like jazz is still evolving?

**XG:** It is. It is still evolving. Looking at the article that you had from 2005 I think, the interview with Yusheng Li. I think he mentions something there about avant-garde music not yet being accepted by a large audience, and we all know it's a big part of academic study for the saxophone, but it's still hard to promote this kind of music in China because it is not largely accepted. But I would say in the last ten years it has changed. It is still changing. It's largely, I think it's really because of the influence from the people coming from outside of the country and showing all of these kinds of things. At first the students got interested because of the variety of extended techniques that you can do on saxophone. Even without the knowledge of appreciating certain avant-garde music, the techniques are the first thing that they notice.

**SJ:** They're interesting all by themselves?

**XG:** Yes. It's just like that. They like to learn how to do that on saxophone. So that became the drive. That became the drive for the students who wanted to study those kinds of techniques; and there's been a huge rise in the last ten years, and of course teachers started to notice, "oh, we have to teach those kinds of things." Oh, sorry, I have to mention the Internet. It's a huge thing that has pushed. We have masters invited from outside of the country that go there and teach and perform, but the exposure is limited. The Internet is the Internet. We had blocks on YouTube and that doesn't stop students from going around and trying to dig up all of the resources outside. So, everything we know, they know. That's how we've been exposed to those things, largely. We wanted to learn.

**SJ:** So that probably has accelerated, you know, without the Internet, the process would have probably been slower?

**XG:** Absolutely. The Internet, and all kinds of video and audio, media.

**SJ:** The great equalizer, so to speak.

**XG:** Exactly [laughing].

**SJ:** So, really having only been around at the college level for less than twenty years, we're getting close to twenty years here soon, it's remarkable how far and how fast the saxophone has come, especially classically in China's culture. What are some of the things that people can now point to as kind of unique accomplishments of Chinese saxophonists? Competitions or awards, teaching posts that are now held in China and around the world, are there people or awards that you can point to that are a testament to what has been achieved in such a little bit of time?

**XG:** Obviously Yusheng Li is one that is still influential. I probably should send you a list, there are so many of them actually. I didn't actually know them until the last eight to ten years, but they have been doing things just like Mr. Li. They have students studying around the world and they have been holding international programs and events in China for saxophone. I know another Mr. Li teaching saxophone, Tong Yang's teacher.

**SJ:** Do you know his name?

**XG:** Yes, I do, but I can't recall at this moment, but I know his last name is Li.

**SJ:** I've probably come across it, because that does sound very familiar.

**XG:** Let's pause that question, I'll send you a list as well as their positions and full names in Chinese. One of the things I will try to dig out as much as possible is the things that have been done that are influential in China, there are many.

**SJ:** Great. So we're to our last question. You're now a saxophone teacher, a successful one, a successful performer, and now having been a witness from the very beginning, what do you see as the future for the saxophone in China? Do you have any hopes or predictions about where we might be headed?

**XG:** My hope. China will be the next center, it might be a little bit ambitious to dream about this, but China will be the next central market of the saxophone development in the world, I would say that. Not just to see it's rise in education and performance market, because it is such a large market it attracts all of the, you know, international venues and also one of the most important things for doing events these days is funding and these past few years the events being held in China, I see a very bright future. Even probably the most renowned competitions can be held in China and even some of the [World Saxophone] Congresses as well. People will get to know more about Chinese saxophone development and also all of this happening will be of course benefitting the Chinese saxophone itself. So, yes, I wouldn't be surprised to see China as a hugely popular place for saxophone performance, both for classical and jazz.

**SJ:** Wonderful. Thank you so much.

**XG:** I hope that has been helpful.

## **Appendix B: Hantao Li Interview on the History of Chinese Saxophone Pedagogy**

**Hantao Li**  
**Narrator**

**Sheldon Johnson**  
**Interviewer**

**November 10, 2016**  
**Interview Conducted Via Skype**

**Sheldon Johnson:** This is for my dissertation on the history of the saxophone in a couple of different countries where they've only started to teach it at the university level pretty recently; that is what this is all about. The purpose is for me to get a better understanding of the teaching history of the saxophone in China. I also interviewed, Xin Gao, do you know him?

**Hantao Li:** Ok. Yes.

**SJ:** I interviewed him a couple months ago. It's been cool to have people agree to do this so thank you for agreeing to do this. Let's get started. The first part is just a little bit about your personal history of musical study. So, you are kind of Chinese saxophone royalty, right?

**HL:** No, no, but I'm flattered.

**SJ:** You have the distinction of having studied with the first saxophone in China. You did study with your father, right?

**HL:** Yes.

**SJ:** So that's always kind of an interesting thing. My father plays saxophone too. He kind of got me started.

**HL:** Was he your teacher?

**SJ:** No. Well, he's not a professional musician, but when I started as a really young student, he's pretty good for an amateur musician. He showed me the basics of embouchure, articulation, etc. But once I got better he sent me on to another teacher, but I guess we kind of have that one thing in common.

So, where have you done your musical studies? Starting all the way back, when did you first start playing the saxophone?

**HL:** Ok, I think I started playing the saxophone at the age of 10. When I was in elementary school.

**SJ:** Ok, I know that the programs are a little bit different in the United States than in China. When you started, did you just kind of start with private lessons with your father or someone, or did you start as part of a school program like here in America, like a band program?

**HL:** Actually, during that time, I don't think any school, any primary school, middle school offered professional musical lessons. So we had like a general music class. So, in that kind of class we just learned singing and some other basic western music stuff. So very basic stuff and there was no chance to study any instrument at that time.

**SJ:** Oh, wow!

**HL:** Actually, at that time, if someone wanted to study a musical instrument seriously, they usually had to find a teacher from a conservatory. That was really common in China.

**SJ:** And so you say, "at that time," has that changed since you were a young person?

**HL:** Yes, I believe that right now they offer high school and middle school band. So, students can study instruments at school or they have private lessons.

**SJ:** So, when did you first enter into a musical school where you had an official curriculum or system of not just saxophone lessons, but ear training, piano, music history, theory, etc.?

**HL:** Ok, my situation, my experience was a little different than many professional Chinese musicians. So in China, the system, I think you already know. The system is totally different than the one in America. The people who would like pursue music as their career, they have to go to conservatories; and only conservatories offer serious western music education. Especially performance majors. So each conservatory, every major conservatory in China has a middle school and high school which is attached to the conservatory. So, in those kinds of schools, students study some general courses like



mathematics and Chinese literature, but the class work is a lot less than general high schools and middle schools. The focus is music.

**SJ:** Ok.

**HL:** That's a normal situation in China. So many professional Chinese musicians begin their musical career, their musical studies when they enter the middle school conservatory or high school conservatory after elementary school. That is very common, but my experience was different. I attended a normal middle school and high school like a normal Chinese student. But I took saxophone lessons and I practiced the saxophone.

**SJ:** Right. Did you take these lessons with your father?

**HL:** Yes, with my father. So kind of like what they do in a middle school or high school attached to a conservatory. My father always pushed me to practice. I attended a normal middle school and high school, I had a lot of normal classes, like mathematics and chemistry, things like that. But I still practiced a lot.

**SJ:** Your father teaches at Sichuan Conservatory, is that correct?

**HL:** Yes.

**SJ:** And so you're saying that there are middle schools and high schools that are kind of connected to that institution, but you didn't go to one of those?

**HL:** Yeah. I didn't go to any. I believe that Xin Gao went to the conservatory middle school and high school associated with Sichuan.

**SJ:** Now, once you were done with your regular high school experience, did you then go into the conservatory for college?

**HL:** Yes, of course. And after my graduation from high school, I did an audition to enter the Sichuan Conservatory for a music performance major. I got accepted by the conservatory. So, technically, I started serious musical training my freshman year.

**SJ:** Ok. So, you started the saxophone when you were around ten years old, was this your first instrument? Did you study piano or have any other kind of musical training before you started playing the saxophone?

**HL:** I was born into a musical family. So, before playing the saxophone, I played piano and the clarinet a little bit, but not very much. Maybe for a couple of months, I think.

**SJ:** Ok, very nice. Moving on a bit. When were you born, what year?

**HL:** I was born in 1984.

**SJ:** Ok, very good. When you started playing the saxophone, at that time, was it a popular instrument for young students to play?

**HL:** So, that's funny. I believe that the Chinese public knew the instrument because of the pop saxophone player Kenny G.

**SJ:** Of course.

**HL:** So right now, even today, still in that way, if you tell people that you are a saxophone player or that you want to play the saxophone, their first reaction will be, "can you play like Kenny G?" So that's pretty common in China. Chinese people knew the instrument from Kenny G's music. After the cold war, China imported a lot of recordings of Kenny G. He was the guy who introduced saxophone music and also the instrument to the Chinese public. And then this was the reason why Chinese people always wanted to start learning the soprano saxophone rather than alto. Because Kenny G plays a lot of soprano.

**SJ:** Are you saying that with that popular style of saxophone being the introduction of the instrument to the Chinese people that the saxophone wasn't as popular before Kenny G?

**HL:** No, not at all. That was due to the history of China. I think that during the cultural revolution, before the 1980s, studying western instruments was not allowed in China.

**SJ:** Not allowed?

**HL:** No.

**SJ:** So, are you saying that all of the playing of traditional western classical music and symphony orchestras, that that all came about in China after the cultural revolution?

**HL:** Yeah.

**SJ:** Ok, interesting. I did not know that.

**HL:** Well, I need to correct something. It was allowed, you could use western instruments to play western *[sic]* music. The point was the music. You could play Chinese music.

**SJ:** So you could not use a western instrument to play traditional Chinese music?

**HL:** You could, but people couldn't use western instruments to play western music.

**SJ:** Oh I see, so it was about the music.

**HL:** The point was what you played. But during this time people still didn't want to study western instruments. That's the history. If you studied western instruments during the cultural revolution that was dangerous. Because you were relating to the western world, western culture, that kind of thing. It wasn't allowed to be studied.

**SJ:** So teachers would use more traditional Chinese music to teach the instrument?

**HL:** Yes.

**SJ:** When you started playing the saxophone, what kind of saxophone did you start on? What model?

**HL:** I will never forget this. I remember that before the day that I picked up the saxophone, my dad bought a local Chinese brand called Xing Hai, and that was the name of a famous Chinese musician, Xing Hai. A very important composer in Chinese history. As you will find if you search on Google, you will find a conservatory named Xing Hai Conservatory. It is one of the major conservatories in China. So the name of the brand was Xing Hai and I believe that they are no longer making saxophones.

**SJ:** Are you a Selmer guy or a Yamaha guy?

**HL:** Selmer.

**SJ:** And your father as well?

**HL:** Yes. Let me talk more about that. So my very first saxophone was a used saxophone and I remember that my father bought it for two hundred yuan. In today's rate that equals about thirty dollars. That was back in the early 1990s. That was still a lot of money in China. That horn was in very bad condition when my father bought it, but you know my father also learned how to fix saxophones in Canada?

**SJ:** With Paul Brodie?

**HL:** Yes, with Paul Brodie. And he used to work in an instrument shop in Canada to learn how fix saxophones. I don't think Paul Brodie taught him how to fix saxophones, but he learned that in the instrument shop.

Ok. So, I remember my father and his assistant spent something like two days trying to fix that saxophone. After that, the saxophone played very well. That was my first horn. When I was in middle school, my father bought me a Yamaha 32.

**SJ:** Is that a student model or is that an in-between student and professional model? An intermediate model?

**HL:** So, yeah, it's in-between a student and professional model. Like a pre-college level.

**SJ:** Ok.

**HL:** So that horn cost my father about \$2,000 US dollars in today's rate.

**SJ:** Wow! And you said that compared to, what did you say that the conversion rate was for the Xing Hai?

**HL:** The Xing Hai was about thirty dollars.

**SJ:** Wow, that's a big difference!

**HL:** Yeah, I still have that Yamaha 32. I used that horn for many years, the Yamaha 32. And before I entered the conservatory for serious musical study and my father bought me a Selmer Series III and that is what I use today.

**SJ:** Now, when you started, you started on a used Chinese brand instrument, was it easy to find saxophones in China, or was it more difficult?

**HL:** At that time, it was hard to buy saxophones in China, to buy a good saxophone in China.

**SJ:** Was it pretty typical then for most students to start on a Chinese-made saxophone as opposed to a Yamaha or a Selmer, or some other brand?

**HL:** I think that during the early 1990s, we could only buy local brands. There was no saxophone major in the conservatories during the early 1990s. I think that after my father established the saxophone performance major in Sichuan Conservatory, some instrument shops had them. We had many instrument shops around the conservatory. So after that they started selling professional saxophones. And you know, they were agents of Yamaha. At the beginning, they sold Yamaha pianos, but after my father established the saxophone major, they found out that there was a saxophone professor at the conservatory, they found out that they could import some Yamaha saxophones from Japan.

**SJ:** And this is once your father became the professor?

**HL:** Yes, and I remember that back in the very beginning, if you wanted to buy a Yamaha saxophone, even if it was a pre-college level or student model, you had to pre-order it. They didn't have them in stock, so you had to tell them that you needed a Yamaha

saxophone and which model. You would pay some money and they would order it for you from Japan. You had to wait for a couple of months.

**SJ:** I imagine that this was really expensive with shipping, taxes, and all of that probably?

**HL:** Yes. You would pay a deposit and they would order it from Japan. You had to wait for a couple of months at that time, during the early 1990s. I can't imagine that.

**SJ:** That's a long time to wait.

So, after talking to Xin Gao, you know, my research is mostly focusing on Russia and China, but I've also looked at places like Germany. I know that in Russia, the first saxophone classes in the conservatories started in the 1970s and then in China, it's really the end of the 1990s, right?

**HL:** Yeah.

**SJ:** Can you talk a little bit about that history? And I guess with your father being the first professor in China, a little bit about how it came to be that he was the professor at Sichuan Conservatory?

**HL:** Of course. His first instrument was a Chinese bamboo flute. He was a Chinese bamboo teacher in the Chinese Instrument Department in Sichuan Conservatory.

**SJ:** Does this flute have a name?

**HL:** The Chinese name is suona. It's a very popular, traditional Chinese woodwind instrument.

**SJ:** I'm sure that I've heard of it and probably even seen it in some context. So he taught that in the conservatory?

**HL:** Yes, I think that was during the late 1980s. He taught that in the Chinese Instrument Department in Sichuan Conservatory.

**SJ:** Was he already playing the saxophone on the side at that time?

**HL:** Yes, I think that he self-studied saxophone. I think he was also affected by Kenny G. He knew there was an instrument called saxophone that was very beautiful and had a very beautiful tone. He was very interested in playing the saxophone. During my childhood, I remember he self-studied saxophone at home.

**SJ:** Now when you say that he studied at home, do you mean that he taught himself, basically? He didn't have a saxophone teacher?

**HL:** No, not at all. And after the Cold War, the Canadian saxophonist Paul Brodie went to Beijing and played a recital. So, during that time, it was very unique for a westerner to play a recital in China, because this was right after the Cold War. China had just opened the country to westerners, to the western world. That was very unique. So he kind of knew, from newspapers about this recital. He decided to go to Beijing to hear that recital. That was also unique during that time in China because of the travel expense. People didn't travel that much during this time. He took a train to go to Beijing. It was at least two days on the train from Sichuan to Beijing because the condition of the railroad was not as good as today. So he was really impressed by the recital of Paul Brodie. After the recital, he had a chance to talk to Paul Brodie and he told him that he was very interested in playing and learning the saxophone, but he couldn't find a serious teacher in China at all. So, Paul Brodie offered him a chance to go to Canada to study with him.

**SJ:** Obviously, he took him up on his offer. Do you know about what year your father went to Canada to study?

**HL:** I'm not quite sure of the exact year, but I can confirm with my dad later.

**SJ:** But he was there for two years, is that correct?

**HL:** Yeah, I think that it was a diploma program at the Royal Academy of Toronto. He got a diploma; he didn't just take private lessons in Canada. He got a diploma from the school. I can confirm the year with him later.

**SJ:** Kind of similar to some of the programs that they have in France and other European countries, like a master's program essentially, right?

**HL:** But this was not a master's degree.

**SJ:** Ok, so kind of like a performer's certificate then, maybe?

**HL:** Yeah, like a performer's certificate.

**SJ:** So, after your father studies with Paul Brodie and he comes back to China, what were some of the things that lead your father to go from teaching in the Chinese Instrument Department to teaching saxophone at Sichuan Conservatory?

**HL:** After the Cold War, after my father studied in Canada, he went back to Sichuan. But during his study in Canada, he still held the position at the conservatory. The conservatory kept his position and through the early 1990s, the conservatory wanted to build the western instrument department. Obviously, there were many people who could teach western instruments, but my father's background was very unique in the early 1990s because he studied a western instrument, in a western country with a western professor. So that experience was very unique. For my father's generation, not

only for saxophone teachers in China, but for flute teachers, piano teachers, or clarinet teachers in his generation, usually they studied those instruments by themselves. But they held those positions in the conservatory in the Western Instrument Department, so my father's background was very unique. So, when he came back to Sichuan Conservatory he suggested that he might establish a saxophone major in the conservatory. But in the very beginning it was very difficult. Because, as we discussed before, in China, especially during that time, when people talked about saxophone, saxophone equaled Kenny G. And Kenny G's music was played in night clubs and many public places, so in Chinese people's minds they saw saxophone as an unhealthy instrument.

**SJ:** So they looked down on the night clubs and those kinds of things?

**HL:** Yes. People thought, "why would you study saxophone in conservatories? That is a 'poppy' instrument. That equals night club music." Because conservatories only teach serious and traditional music in China. So that's what they wanted to rebuild in China during the early 1990s. The administrators in China, they asked, "can you play classical music on the saxophone?" That was their concern. So my father had to demonstrate classical saxophone music to them. And I remember that a couple of months after my father went back to Sichuan, when he wanted to transfer from the Traditional Chinese Instrument Department to the Western Instrument Department, he played a recital in the big concert hall in the conservatory. He played all classical saxophone music, and I remember the Creston Sonata was on the program. And my father practiced that sonata every day at home. So many people, my neighbors and my father's friends couldn't understand what he was playing, what he was practicing at home. Because it was a totally new thing to many people, to most of the Chinese. This was all on alto, my father didn't play any soprano music. There was large audience for that recital and the conservatory approved the establishment of the saxophone major in Sichuan Conservatory afterwards. In the very beginning he had no students.

**SJ:** No students?

**HL:** Because even though the major was established in China, you had to convince people to learn this instrument. For people who wanted to pursue music as a career, they played clarinet, flute, or even trombone rather than saxophone.

**SJ:** So, when you say that there was this skepticism about the saxophone, was that from colleagues of your father, other teachers of different instruments? Was it from the administration or the government, maybe all three?

**HL:** All of them.

**SJ:** This kind of leads me into my next question; a lot of eastern countries, but I think China especially are kind of well-known in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for a large diversity of

musical styles. In China, you have now a very rich tradition of playing western classical music at a very high level, but you also have local folk musics and things like that. What has it been like for the saxophone to fit into the history of Chinese music? Whether it's folk music or western classical music, does it have a place now within folk music, traditional Chinese music?

**HL:** We don't play much traditional Chinese music on saxophone in China.

**SJ:** Really?

**HL:** Because, you know, the compositional method and style of Chinese music and western music is totally different. Have you talked about this with Xin Gao?

**SJ:** I did a little bit.

**HL:** I can tell you, for the traditional compositional style of western music, that's the I-V-I progression, right? That is a traditional compositional style and method of western music. For the Chinese compositional style and method, we use a pentatonic system. So five pitches, and every song is based on each of the pitches and forms a key. That's the pentatonic system of Chinese compositional style. So, if a piece is composed in that way, it sounds very Chinese. For Chinese music, we play it on traditional Chinese instruments so it all sounds like that. So, if we play that kind of music on the saxophone, it sounds weird, and I think people try to avoid that. Not only on saxophone, but clarinet and flute players in China, they don't play much traditional Chinese music on those instruments. They do a little, but it's not encouraged.

**SJ:** Because it seems like, and this probably shows my ignorance a little bit, but with some Chinese composers that have had success in western culture, I think of someone like Tan Dun, or Dorothy Chang, and it seems to me that there is kind of a blending of western classical music with elements of traditional Chinese music. Is this uncommon, or something that we only see here in the West and isn't so prevalent in China?

**HL:** I think right now, the young generation are composing many things that contains western elements and Chinese elements. And I played a concerto written by a famous Chinese composer at NASA (North American Saxophone Alliance) last time. So, that piece is a concerto and for most of the parts it follows the traditional western compositional method, the I-V-I chord progression, but for the saxophone solo part, the composer used the Chinese compositional style, the pentatonic system.

**SJ:** What is this composer's name?

**HL:** Chu Wang Hua. He lives Australia right now. He is a famous Chinese composer.

**SJ:** I'll have to look into this piece, I'm always looking for new repertoire.



**HL:** It's a good piece. It's called *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra*.

**SJ:** So basically, what you're saying, more or less, with some exceptions for new composers, there's a pretty big distinction between traditional Chinese music and western classical music?

**HL:** Yes.

**SJ:** In your studies as a saxophonist at Sichuan Conservatory, but also leading up to that, what kinds of musical styles did you study with your dad? Was it mostly the traditional repertoire like Creston and Glazunov?

**HL:** Yes, that was the standard repertoire. My very first étude book, method book was the Larry Teal book.

**SJ:** Was it the Saxophonist's Workbook?

**HL:** I think the name might be The Art of Saxophone Playing. It was written by Larry Teal.

**SJ:** But that has mostly stuff about embouchure, articulation, tonguing, that kind of stuff.

**HL:** Yes, and scales.

**SJ:** It has scales in it? I'll have to look at that.

**HL:** One thing I must clarify is, my father was influenced by the American style. Because Canada is in North America, right? So he was influenced greatly by the American saxophone playing style. He didn't use much French material during his early career of teaching in Sichuan Conservatory. Right now, he uses all kinds of stuff from around the world. And before 2000, he rarely used materials, music from French saxophone players.

**SJ:** So what kind of repertoire did you start with? If we're excluding the traditional French stuff, what would have been an early piece that you would have worked on when you first started?

**HL:** I started with the Heiden Sonata, Creston Sonata.

**SJ:** Sure.

**HL:** Scaramouche.

**SJ:** Which is French. But definitely, Heiden and Creston are two big non-French pieces.

**HL:** Yeah, the Glazunov Sonata as well.

**SJ:** What were some of the teaching techniques that your dad used that stood out to you? Perhaps techniques that you will use as a teacher?

**HL:** Teaching techniques? Nothing special. He focused on a lot of basic stuff, fundamental stuff. I remember, he liked to ask me to practice scales. I had to practice at least an hour of scales before practicing the pieces. And long tones. I think he focused a lot on basics, fundamental stuff. I think because he started serious saxophone study very late, after the age of thirty, he knew how important the fundamental stuff is. He had to learn those kinds of things around the age of thirty. That was very late for a musician to learn that kind of stuff.

**SJ:** That's impressive though.

**HL:** Yeah, he focused a lot on fundamental stuff.

**SJ:** So, having said that, now that you've studied in several places now, we were together for a year with [Dr. John] Sampen at Bowling Green, and now you're studying with Kenneth Tse; in general, how would you compare the teaching styles of teachers in America with what you experienced in China?

**HL:** Ok, that's a big question.

**SJ:** I know (both laughing).

**HL:** Because you know my father's teacher was Paul Brodie. His teaching style is kind of similar to Paul Brodie's. I'm not sure who Paul Brodie studied with.

**SJ:** I think it was [Larry] Teal.

**HL:** Teal? Ok, that explains why my father used the Larry Teal method book. I think it's similar to that style; and compared to, let's talk about Dr. Sampen first. You know because you have been to Bowling Green. Because at Bowling Green the focus is on contemporary music.

**SJ:** Sure.

**HL:** Because when I got to Bowling Green I was twenty-four years old already. So for my studies, the focus was not fundamental stuff like scales, arpeggios, or thirds. I remember during my first lesson with Dr. Sampen, he asked me to play those kinds of things for ten minutes. Then he stopped me and said, "ok, that was good, we won't do that in our future lessons. So we will focus on music, on pieces."

**SJ:** Interesting. So, can you compare that experience to your experience with Tse and how that is similar or different to your father's style?

**HL:** I think, because you know, Tse and Sampen are different generations.

**SJ:** That's true as well.

**HL:** Yeah, both are very good teachers, but their styles are very different. Dr. Tse doesn't do as much contemporary music as Sampen.

**SJ:** Right.

**HL:** And Dr. Tse likes to talk about the oral cavity and tongue position a lot. I think during my first year studying year here at the University of Iowa, more than eighty percent of my lessons were focused on tongue position and the oral cavity. And I think Dr. Tse wants to develop his students' musicality from the approach of technique. So rather than talk about, "ok, let's play more musically, or how do I deal with this phrase, music, passage?" He never says, "you should play more musically here. Or you should change your style here." He only talks about your tongue position, your intonation. Things like that. I think that is his approach.

**SJ:** Interesting. And this is maybe a little off topic, but does he use the term "voicing" when he talks about these things?

**HL:** He doesn't use that term. Yeah, he focuses a lot on tongue position and the oral cavity.

**SJ:** Ok. Interesting. Some of this is just the fact that you are working on advanced degrees at this point, but in China it was a bit more technique focused? And in America it's been more about moving beyond that? But some of that is just because you're more advanced now.

**HL:** Because when I got to Bowling Green, I already had the bachelor's degree from Sichuan Conservatory. I think based on my situation, my focus was not on the fundamental or technical stuff at that stage.

**SJ:** Great, moving on. You talk about how at Bowling Green obviously there is a big focus on contemporary music and the avant-garde, has the reception of that type of music evolved since the saxophone was first introduced in the conservatory? Is it more or less accepted and played by people now than it was twenty years ago?

**HL:** You mean contemporary music, right? Compared to twenty years ago?

**SJ:** Right.

**HL:** Ok. Speaking of contemporary music, I think that's a very old style, right? Because, have you heard *Concerto After Glière*?

**SJ:** Yes.

**HL:** Yeah, that it contemporary music, right? That's tonal music, but if you compare that piece to Dr. [Marilyn] Shrude's saxophone music, that's totally different. But her music is still contemporary saxophone music.

**SJ:** I guess I'm thinking more about avant-garde stuff. More like [Christian] Lauba, [François] Rossé, and the "weirder" things.

**HL:** I think that people right now, students and teachers are very interested in learning and playing that kind of stuff in China. But based on the situation and the history of the classical saxophone in China. If we come from the early 1990s up to today, it's been less than thirty years, the development of the classical saxophone. And I think that the classical saxophone is still developing in China. But compared to twenty years ago, there's a huge difference.

**SJ:** You say that there is an interest among players, is there also an audience for it? I know that's something in America that there's a lot of discussion about, you know, that maybe audiences don't want to hear that kind of music. Is there more of an audience for it now as well?

**HL:** Yeah, of course.

**SJ:** Good, very nice. You know, I recently interviewed Xin Gao as I said earlier, and he mentioned that recently, there have been some pretty important saxophone events happening in China. He told me about a big gathering of jazz artists at a Shaolin temple, the first saxophone seminar at the National Higher Art Institution. Are you familiar with any of these events?

**HL:** When did you interview Xin Gao?

**SJ:** This was back in September, I believe.

**HL:** September? Yeah I will tell you that, in America, we have NASA (North American Saxophone Alliance) right? This is the biggest organization of saxophone in North America, right? So, in China, my father would like to establish an organization similar to NASA. So, they had a conference, let me see, in October or late September of this year. That was the first conference of college saxophone professors in China. Their conference was held in Sichuan Conservatory. So all of the saxophone professors and teachers from the college level went to that conference and they discussed how to

develop the saxophone as a group. Rather than develop the saxophone regionally, in different parts of China. I think that association is very similar to NASA.

**SJ:** And this was the first time that it happened?

**HL:** Yeah, that was the very first time.

**SJ:** And this was when?

**HL:** Let me see, give me just a moment. They will have the presidential election later this year. My father wanted to have a conference like the NASA conference in China like every two years or annually. Because you know China is a huge country, right?

**SJ:** Yes.

**HL:** But there is still not a professional saxophone organization or association of the whole country.

**SJ:** But this is China working towards that a little bit?

**HL:** Yeah. Ok, I have the date here. The last day of the conference was September 29, 2016.

**SJ:** This year?

**HL:** Yes, this year. And the full name of the event is, "Chinese College and Conservatory Saxophone Symposium."

**SJ:** Very good. All right, I've just got a couple of questions left. Again, I really appreciate your time.

In addition to your father, who, I guess you could call him the father, or at this point, the grandfather of Chinese saxophone, who are some of the other influential teachers who are now teaching in China that you think are important?

**HL:** You mean now?

**SJ:** Yeah, a few that I already know about like Tong Yang comes to mind. He seems to be an important one that I've come across.

**HL:** Ok, in my opinion, I think first of all, I have to mention Li Manlong.

**SJ:** Yes, he's another one that I've come across.

**HL:** Because you know, he's from the old generation.

**SJ:** Right, and didn't he also teach clarinet? Am I mistaken?

**HL:** Yeah, I think before saxophone, he played clarinet.

**SJ:** Ok, and he's still teaching, correct?

**HL:** Yes. Why I'm mentioning this guy is because, you know, the political system in China is everything. And everything in Beijing is more important than in other cities. This is totally different than in America, right? So, the Central Conservatory has a very prestigious position in China. He was a guy who started teaching saxophone in the Central Conservatory. But his background is totally different than my father's background. He didn't learn the saxophone with a professional saxophone player. He studied saxophone by himself and he didn't go to a western country to learn saxophone like my father did.

**SJ:** Right.

**HL:** The important thing is that he started teaching saxophone in the most important Chinese conservatory, the Central Conservatory in the 1990s. I think he contributed a lot to the development of the classical saxophone.

**SJ:** He started teaching there after your father, right?

**HL:** Yeah, five or six years after my father established the saxophone major in the Sichuan Conservatory.

**SJ:** Yes, that's definitely another name that I've come across that is important.

**HL:** The different thing is, he never got a full-time position in the Central Conservatory.

**SJ:** Oh, really?

**HL:** That's one thing. Because at the time that my father started teaching saxophone at Sichuan Conservatory, he had a full-time position. He was a full-time teacher from the very beginning when he came back to China. But Li Manlong never got a full-time position in Central Conservatory, he was a part-time teacher always. And let me see, in 2012, I went to Beijing to play a recital in Central Conservatory. And the same year, Li Manlong was fired by the Central Conservatory. He left the conservatory and now he teaches in the Chinese Conservatory in Beijing. That's another conservatory in Beijing. It's a different conservatory, but he taught in Central Conservatory for many years, that's a fact.

**SJ:** And so now it's Tong Yang who teaches at the Central Conservatory, correct?

**HL:** Yes. Tong Yang, and I think he holds a full-time position right now.

**SJ:** Do you know who he studied with?

**HL:** He studied in Switzerland.

**SJ:** With Marcus Weiss, or?

**HL:** I don't know about his teacher, but I am sure that he studied in Switzerland. I think he has a master's degree.

**SJ:** I'm sure there are several others. I think Xin Gao sent a list of books and people.

**HL:** And another guy that I must mention is the saxophone professor at the Shanghai Conservatory.

**SJ:** What's his name?

**HL:** Xiaolu Zhang. I believe Xin Gao probably mentioned his name.

**SJ:** And he teaches at Shanghai?

**HL:** Yes, and he's an assistant professor there. He has a full-time position and he graduated, if I remember correctly from Boston Conservatory. And he holds a jazz degree.

**SJ:** Ah, ok.

**HL:** So he was the very first saxophone teacher who opened a jazz major in China. And Shanghai Conservatory is one of the major conservatories in China. In Chinese people's minds, in general, the Central Conservatory is the best conservatory in China, depending on the different majors. And Shanghai Conservatory is the second best.

**SJ:** You mention jazz, what is the state of jazz like right now in China?

**HL:** Ok, I'm not the right guy to ask this question, because you know, I don't play any jazz. But I think that people are interested in playing jazz. And I think, in talking about jazz, I think Xiaolu is the very first person.

**SJ:** Cool. Ok, here's the last little thrust. As a Chinese saxophonist today, how do you see the future of the saxophone in China? What are your hopes for it?

**HL:** I think that classical saxophone in China has huge potential, and right now, it's a very popular instrument in China. I think it's the most popular woodwind instrument in

China. We can tell from the auditions of students every year. Because I teach in Sichuan Conservatory. And for amateur students, their first choice is the saxophone, I believe. If you ask a high school student or middle school student to learn a woodwind instrument, their first choice is the saxophone.

**SJ:** Did I hear you say that you taught at Sichuan for a while?

**HL:** Yeah, I still have that position in Sichuan.

**SJ:** Ok.

**HL:** So, I think that Kenny G is still a big name saxophone player in China, even today, but not as much as he was in the early 1990s.

**SJ:** Sure.

**HL:** Because Kenny G's music is popular, so that makes many young kids want to learn saxophone. I think that saxophone is very popular in China, but what I would like to see, I really want to see many professional Chinese composers write serious music for saxophone. Rather than only playing standard western repertoire in China. My father has collaborated with very professional composers from Sichuan Conservatory and one of the composers graduated from Tokyo University, I think. And he is the first guy who holds a doctorate in composition in the history of Sichuan Conservatory. He wrote a quartet for my father's quartet. And my father's quartet premiered that piece in Bangkok for the World Saxophone Congress in 2010, I believe. But I really want to see more serious music written by Chinese composers.

**SJ:** Yeah, and that will probably continue to help raise the profile of the instrument in China.

**HL:** Yeah, another change that I would like to see is, right now I think it is possible to learn saxophone in every major conservatory in China for a performance degree, but I think the saxophone teachers and professors in those conservatories need to... Not everyone has a full-time position, that's my concern.

**SJ:** Right.

**HL:** I can't believe that for a popular instrument like saxophone, the teachers in conservatories only have part-time positions. That is my concern. My father has a full-time position, Xiaolu has a full-time position, and Tong Yang has a full-time position. Only people in major conservatories have full-time positions.

**SJ:** So, it sounds like it really comes down to an increase in job opportunities, which is something that we are still dealing with in America. But it sounds like there's an



audience for the music. Talking to Xin Gao, he also seemed very very optimistic about the future of the saxophone in China. One of his hopes is for it to become one of the next centers like France, Spain, and Switzerland. That people would come to China from America and other places to study the instrument.

**HL:** Yes, and another thing that I want to say is, for the elder generation like my father's generation, they are better educators than performers due to their backgrounds. So I think Xin Gao and I are the first generation representing the young generation of saxophone in China... Because Xin Gao was my father's first student in Sichuan Conservatory. I think he talked to you about that. He played the clarinet, and my father wanted to have a good student. He transferred from clarinet to saxophone. So I think that he, Xin Gao is one of the young generation representing saxophone in China. And he's a very good performer.

**SJ:** Yeah, both of you are.

**HL:** I think we will need to have more performers than educators in the future. Because, like Li Manlong, I think he teaches well, but he can't play well due to his age and his background. I think that if the young generation can promote the instrument by playing at a very high level with recitals, performances, and concerts that will help a lot. Rather than only teaching in the conservatories.

**SJ:** Well, Hantao, I can't thank you enough for agreeing to do this.

**HL:** You're welcome.

**SJ:** I appreciate this so much.

**HL:** Did you get all of your questions answered today?

**SJ:** Yes, I think so.

**HL:** So one last thing that I would like to mention is that in China there are two groups of saxophone teachers and players. Li Manlong is one of the teachers who always sends his students to France. Because he likes that style, but for my father, he would like for his students to study in America rather than France. He thinks that at this stage, it's not the best idea for Chinese students to go to France. Because we can only get degrees, performance degrees, master's degrees from the Paris Conservatory.

**SJ:** Why is that? They don't count them from other places?

**HL:** In France, the music institutions, only the Paris Conservatory and the Lyon Conservatory can issue degrees.

**SJ:** I didn't know that.

**HL:** So at all of the other places you can only take private lessons. They say it's a conservatory, but it's like a music institution. It's a small building. You take private lessons and study every week, but that's all. After two years of study, you don't have a degree, you only take private lessons with a very famous saxophone player.

**SJ:** In hopes of probably getting into the Paris Conservatory afterwards?

**HL:** You know how hard that is, right? Based on the saxophone student's level, it's really hard to get in. I think we have one guy who has graduated from the Paris Conservatory in China. He is the very first one and only one who has a master's degree from Paris Conservatory. His name is Xie Liang. He is the only Chinese students who has a master's degree from Paris Conservatory; so my father's concern, and the concern of many other Chinese saxophone professors, is if we send students to France, they can improve their playing a lot, for sure, but the disadvantage is that they can't get admission to the Paris Conservatory or the Lyon Conservatory because it's too competitive. It's too hard to compete with other French and European students. If they can't get a degree from France, after they come back to China it's impossible for them to find a job. Because college teaching positions require at least a master's degree in China right now. That's the minimum requirement. So that's my father's concern; and many other teachers agree with him. But for the other side, for teachers like Li Manlong, they think that the French represent the highest level of saxophone playing. So regardless of whether or not you get a degree, or whether or not you get into the Paris Conservatory, you still have to go to France to study with a French saxophone player. Because they think that French saxophone players are way better than American saxophone players. That's a misconception, but to some that's a fact.

**SJ:** Interesting.

**HL:** So, I think in China for my generation, many of my friends studied in Europe or in France rather than America. Because we have had Xin Gao and I and a few more students who have studied in American schools. Maybe around ten or twenty people, that's probably all. But for people who have studied, or who are studying in France, there are more than us. And after they come back to China they encourage their students to go to France rather than the United States. You understand that?

**SJ:** Yes, and you know, it's funny that you bring that up because there is a similar strain of thought in America. I've studied with Hemke and Sampen who are both kind of in the French-American school and then with Dr. Leaman who is in very much the American style of things. And in that French-American school, I wouldn't say that it's mandated, but there is a strong encouragement to get a Fulbright or whatever and just go to France to study. Even if you don't get a degree, just to go and experience what it's like to study with Claude Delangle, Jean-Yves Formeau, Vincent David, so on and so forth. And a lot

of people I know, a lot of people that I went to school with, especially in undergrad and at Bowling Green have done that.

**HL:** You know another big reason for going to study saxophone in France is the cost. If you get admission, the tuition is waived almost totally. But for American schools, even if you get admission from a university you have to pay. That's another big reason. So right now there is a tendency to go to France to study saxophone. That is still popular. A very popular idea among Chinese saxophone students. You have to go to France. But many teachers don't agree with that; including me. I mean, it's not a bad idea, but it depends on what you want.

**SJ:** Exactly, also on what you can afford (laughing).

**HL:** Yeah, because I have friends who have done that. You spend two or three years in Paris. You take lessons with Formeau, with Claude Delangle, or Vincent David. All very famous saxophone players in the world, but after that you don't have a degree. You go back to China and you have to restart. You have to find a school to do a master's degree.

**SJ:** Very interesting. Well, again I thank you so much.

**HL:** You are very welcome.

## Appendix C: Recital Programs



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
School of Music

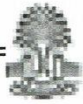
**SHELDON JOHNSON, *saxophone***  
**in**  
**CANDIDACY RECITAL**

**Claudio Olivera, *piano***

**Monday, March 3, 2014**  
**6:00PM | Recital Hall**

Fantabeljin (2006)	Tayloe Harding (b. 1959)
Fantasia (1948) Animé Lent Très animé	Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)
Lessons of the Sky (1985)	Rodney Rogers (b. 1953)
The Garden of Love (2001)	Jacob ter Veldhuis (b. 1951)
Sonata for alto saxophone and piano (1998) Prelude Recitative Variations Toccata	Mark Kilstofte (b. 1958)

*Mr. Johnson is a student of Dr. Clifford Leaman.  
This recital is given in fulfillment of the requirements for admission to  
candidacy for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.*



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
School of Music

**SHELDON JOHNSON, *soprano saxophone***  
**GABRIEL FADALE, *soprano and tenor saxophones***  
**PO-FANG CHANG, *baritone saxophone***  
**in**  
**GRADUATE CHAMBER RECITAL**

**Andrew Wassum, *alto saxophone***

**Friday, April 18, 2014**  
**6:00 PM • Recital Hall**

Quartette (Allegro de Concert) (1879)	Caryl Florio (1843-1920)
Alaric I or II (1989)	Gavin Bryars (b. 1943)
Sechs Bagatellen (1953) Allegro con spirito Rubato. Lamentoso Allegro grazioso Presto ruvido Adagio. Mesto ( <i>Béla Bartók in Memoriam</i> ) Molto vivace. Capriccioso	György Ligeti (1923-2006)
Prodigal Child (2004)	John Fitz Rogers (b. 1963)
Tango Virtuoso (1993)	Thierry Escaich (b. 1965)

*Mr. Johnson, Mr. Fadale, and Mr. Chang  
are students of Dr. Clifford Leaman.  
This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.*



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
School of Music

**SHELDON JOHNSON, *saxophone***  
**in**  
**GRADUATE RECITAL**

**Claudio Olivera, *piano***

**Tuesday, October 21, 2014**  
**7:30PM | Recital Hall**

Wings (1981)

Joan Tower  
(b. 1938)

Ballade (1938)

Frank Martin  
(1890-1974)

Strange Dreams (2001)  
Unheard Music  
Ballerina Mom  
Mermaid Song  
Pools of Light

Nathan Daughtrey  
(b. 1975)

Brett Landry, marimba

Two Elegies Framing a Shout (2001)  
Elegy 1  
Shout  
Elegy 2

Mark-Anthony Turnage  
(b. 1960)

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UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
School of Music

*presents*

**SHELDON JOHNSON, *saxophone***  
**in**  
**GRADUATE RECITAL**

**Claudio Olivero, *piano***

**Wednesday, April 1, 2015**  
**7:30 PM • Recital Hall**

Sequenza VIIb (1969/1993)

Luciano Berio  
(1925-2003)

Gate (2001)

Graham Fitkin  
(b. 1963)

Deux Pièces (1978)  
Lento  
Allegro giusto

Edison Denisov  
(1929-1996)

Sonata (1984)

Two-Part Invention  
La follia nuova: a lament for George Cacioppo  
Scherzo "Will o' the wisp"  
Recitative and Dance

William Albright  
(1944-1998)

Adios Nonino (1959)

Astor Piazzolla  
(1921-1992)  
Arr. Têhò

*Mr. Johnson is a student of Dr. Clifford Leaman.*  
*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements*  
*for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance*



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

School of Music

*presents*

**SHELDON JOHNSON, *saxophone***  
**in**  
**GRADUATE RECITAL**

**Claudio Olivero, *piano***  
**Alan Rudell, *piano***

**Monday, October 26, 2015**  
**7:30PM • Recital Hall**

- |                                     |                      |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Two Memorials                       | Mark Anthony Turnage |
| Trier (2000)                        | (b. 1960)            |
| Memorial (1995)                     |                      |
| Breaking (2011)                     | John Fitz Rogers     |
| break open                          | (b. 1963)            |
| break with                          |                      |
| break in                            |                      |
| break into                          |                      |
| break off                           |                      |
| break down                          |                      |
| break up                            |                      |
| break free                          |                      |
| break through                       |                      |
| break away                          |                      |
| Sonate (1970)                       | Edison Denisov       |
| Allegro                             | (1929-1996)          |
| Lento                               |                      |
| Allegro moderato                    |                      |
| Sonate in C-Sharp (1943)            | Fernande Decruck     |
| Très modéré,                        | (1896-1954)          |
| expressif-molto moderato espressivo |                      |
| Noël                                |                      |
| Fileuse                             |                      |
| Nocturne and Final                  |                      |

*Mr. Johnson is a student of Dr. Clifford Leaman.*  
*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements*  
*for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.*



## Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Exemption Letter and Interview Consent Forms

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OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN RESEARCH DECLARATION of NOT RESEARCH

This is to certify that research proposal: **Pro00059304**

Entitled: *The Political Suppression of the Saxophone and its Subsequent Pedagogical Development in Select Non-Democratic Countries*

Submitted by:

Principal Investigator: Sheldon Johnson  
School of Music  
813 Assembly Street  
Columbia, SC 29208

was reviewed on **09/7/2016** by the Office of Research Compliance, an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB), and has determined that the referenced research study is not subject to the Protection of Human Subject Regulations in accordance with 45 CFR 46 et. seq.

No further oversight by the USC IRB is required; however, the investigator should inform the Office of Research Compliance prior to making any substantive changes in the research methods, as this may alter the status of the project.

If you have questions, contact Arlene McWhorter at [arlenem@sc.edu](mailto:arlenem@sc.edu) or (803) 777-7095.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa M. Johnson".

Lisa M. Johnson  
IRB Manager

Dear Prospective Interviewee,

My name is Sheldon Johnson. I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Music at the University of South Carolina. As part of the requirements of my Doctor of Musical Arts degree in music performance I am conducting interviews, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the history of the saxophone and saxophone pedagogy in your country. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview about your knowledge and experiences as a saxophonist in your country. In particular, you will be asked questions about pedagogy and important pedagogues. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. The meeting will take place at UNCG \_\_\_\_\_ (or) a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 40 minutes. The interview will be audio and/or videotaped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The tapes will only be reviewed by the interviewer who will transcribe and analyze them.

Participation is not confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of South Carolina. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings.

Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also quit being in the study at any time or decide not to answer any question you are not comfortable answering.

We will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ or my faculty advisor, (Dr. Clifford Leaman \_\_\_\_\_, and cleaman@mozart.sc.edu) if you have study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at the University of South Carolina at 803-777-7095.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please sign and return this form to me or contact me at the number listed below to discuss participating.

With kind regards,  
(Signature)

Sheldon Johnson



Xin Gao

Sep. 20, 2016

Dear Hantao Li,

My name is Sheldon Johnson. I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Music at the University of South Carolina. As part of the requirements of my Doctor of Musical Arts degree in music performance I am conducting interviews, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the history of the saxophone and saxophone pedagogy in your country. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview about your knowledge and experiences as a saxophonist in your country. In particular, you will be asked questions about pedagogy and important pedagogues. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. The meeting will take place at \_\_\_\_\_ Skype \_\_\_\_\_ (or) a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 40 minutes. The interview will be audio and/or videotaped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The tapes will only be reviewed by the interviewer who will transcribe and analyze them.

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(Signature)

Sheldon Johnson